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RUE MORQUE



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Rhy Herryhausen has brought some of the most memorable movie monsters to life through the meticulous art of stop-motion model animation. More than two decades after those curious creatures first appeared on theatre screens, his work continues to thrill and fascinate. In a new interview, Rue Morgue pays tribute to the legendary animator.

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NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND

In 1984, at just nine years old and a lover of all things spooky, I got bit by the *Ghostbusters* bug... hard. I had a *Ghostbusters* lunchbox. In it was a *Ghostbusters* thermos, which I drank from on Saturdays while wearing my *Ghostbusters* T-shirt as I watched *Ghostbusters* on video. I even stockpiled a copy of the *Ghostbusters* novelization. If I were older, I might have even gotten a *Ghostbusters* tattoo.

Like every other kid that grew up in the '80s, I loved *Ghostbusters*. I don't know how many times I watched the movie but I never grew tired of it. I loved the librarian, I loved the eggs that fired themselves, I loved Slimer the disgusting blob (who actually didn't get his name 'til the animated cartoon, which I also watched religiously). I loved Dana's fridge from hell, I loved the ridiculous headgear Egon straps to Louis Tully after he's possessed by Vinz Clortho, I loved Gozer's creepy voice ("Choosooose and perish!"), I also loved all the goofy supernatural jargon, and the fact that these frumpy, out-of-shape, thirty-something paranormal janitors ran around in a shritbox '59 Caddy ambulance firing nuclear accelerator streams at spectres!

While it's a stretch to call *Ghostbusters* a horror-comedy, the film remains close to the hearts of many genre fans. It's probably safer to call it a spook-comedy or a funny supernatural story about "the dead rising from the grave" — cherished for the same reasons we dig *The Monster Squad*, *The 'Burbs* or *Beetlejuice*. Plus, it starred some familiar comedians that us Canadians grew up watching on the sketch comedy series *SCTV* and some very famous funny guys from its American equivalent, *SNL*.

But it wasn't all jokes and gags. *Ghostbusters* successfully updated the classic Abbott and Costello ghost-busting theme with new (albeit bogus) technology. At the same time, it actually boasted a few moments of genuine creepiness, such as Winston Zeddemore quoting from *The Book of Revelation*, Dana's voice and twisted face during the possession sequence ("There is no Dana, only Zui!"), the spooky librarian torso ghost, that weird electronic track called "Magic" that plays out over the "all hell's breaking loose" montage, and even the corpse cabby's lipless snarl. That one gave me the willies.

Also, I'm not sure how many people have noticed that *Ghostbusters* is a massive blockbuster movie that's effectively rooted in Lovecraftian ideas. Gozer the Gozerian (or Gozer the Destructor, Volgus Zildrohar and Gozer the Traveler), in essence, one of the Old Ones, a malevolent, interdimensional Mesopotamian deity from 6000 BC that tears a rift into our world with wholesale destruction on its agenda — not unlike one of Lovecraft's otherworldly beasts. Dana's apartment, on the corner of "spook central," was designed and constructed by Gozer worshippers, who would conduct bizarre rituals, using the "unusual" (Euclidean?) geometry of the structure to concentrate paranormal turbulence and bring forth the weird deity. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if Chululu's name was an entry in the *Ghostbusters*' trusty Tobin's Spirit Guide.

In an age where creatures, ghosts and even entire environments are now generated (often poorly) with computers, the puppets, miniatures and stop-motion effects showcased in *Ghostbusters* still hold up pretty darned well. Even Sigourney Weaver's levitation gag was shot in-camera — but you'd never know it was n't an optical effect (the post that lifted her was hidden in the curtains). Particularly memorable: the stop-motion animated demi-god terror dogs and the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man, a behemoth who smashes through Manhattan and climbs buildings like King Kong. Yup, *Ghostbusters* is an imaginative classic that's become a pop culture phenomenon, truly deserving of the hype it's garnered over the years.

Now, with a third movie in the script development stage (tentatively titled *Ghostbusters in Hell*), a highly anticipated video game arrives that reunites most of the cast of the original film (see p.32), it's set to drop this month from Atari, along with the Blu-Ray release of the first film and a DVD collection of *The Real Ghostbusters* TV show. The game sees the *Ghostbusters* face off against Gozer all over again, on a scale that consultant/writer Harold Ramis admits is way outside the shooting limits of a film. With any luck it will both reimagine interest in the third sequel and introduce the original movie to a whole new generation of kids who weren't even born the first time Venkman, Slantz, Spengler and Zeddemore showed that prehistoric blitch how they do things downtown.

After all this time, I still find *Ghostbusters* to be a side-splittingly funny, well-achieved, monster-filled, family-friendly spookshow — well, except for that odd scene where Slantz gets a blow job from an apparition. I don't know how they got away with that.

Finally, I'd end this by saying, "I ain't afraid of no ghosts"... but that just wouldn't be the truth

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POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



SAM RAIMI'S RETURN to low-budget filmmaking IS a cause for celebration for all horror movie mavens. Although I'm a little wary of directors, now wildly successful, returning to their roots with dusted-off scripts written and set eons ago, *Drag Me to Hell* sounds promising. The demon-possessed billygoat will surely be a laugh-not highlight. The other highlight for me in the May issue was your ongoing coverage of Forrest J Ackerman's passing. With your standout Basil Gogge cover issue several months before his death, it's taken a Canadian publication to lead the way. Just as I shed tears over the death of Jim Henson — and undoubtedly will when Ray Harryhausen departs — so too I did for Ackerman. These are men I never knew yet miss as friends. While I can not totally agree with Bill Warren's sentiment that he meant more to him than his father, Ackerman's *Famous Monsters* presence made this oddball's childhood a little — no a lot — less odd.

GARY KIMBER — PICKERING, ONTARIO

PEDRO CABEZUELO laments that comic *Zombie Tales* never delivers on "the [bar-raising] great like" of *The Blood-Drinking Zombies Who Started Living and Became Incredibly Strange Creatures* without realizing it's a reversal of "the world's first monster musical." 1964 horror film *The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Blood-Drinking Zombies?* Similarly, Brad Abraham and his success position *Personal Effects Dark Art* as the first attempt to bring interactive media and play to literature, but it's been done earlier in *Cathy's Book*, *Cathy's Key* and *Cathy's Ring* from Sean Stewart and yep, the same Jordan Weissman who worked on *Personal Effects*. Whereas *PE: DA* focuses on horror mystery, *Cathy* is marketed to pretenses, along with Scholastic's ten-book *Potter*-like series (though, granted, with less investigative elements, as everything is centred around one site) *The 39 Clues*. Finally, can we please stop drawing notice to how clever *RM*'s writers are when it comes to trivial references? Every issue seems to have one or two, and perhaps it's my mantle of the month, but it bugged me this issue: "a film [which] suffers from a lack of... vision" for the *Cyclops* review and "a brutal horror score with, uh, some heart" in the review for the *My Bloody Valentine* soundtrack. Granted, the titles of the reviews themselves are (usually pretty good) plays on words, but they sit outside the flow of the actual review and are more palatable. Writers, certainly continue to make them, but trust that your readers can pick up on 'em without your blatant help.

MORBUS IFF — CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

I JUST GOT the new *RM* (508), and all I've read so far is your editorial. It's depressing, but the best commentary on the state of our filmed genre I've seen. Jesus wept. Keep fighting the fight.

MICK GARRIS — HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

THANK YOU for putting the King of Rock 'n' Roll on your cover. Lux has been my hero for 30 years and when he passed I was pretty pissed that none of the music mags gave him anything more than a one-page obit with some pretty poor/incorrect info about him. Your cover story was a true tribute to a person who had guided many people through the world of horror and music culture.

PAUL CANGELOSI — ADDRESS WITHHELD

THANK YOU for a great article on the late great Lux Interior. The Cramps have always been one of my favourite bands. I've never had the pleasure of meeting Lux or Ivy, but I've always felt like we were kindred spirits. No matter the season or my mood, the second I put on The Cramps I felt like it was summer and I was at a drive-in watching *Blood Feast* and getting laid. The Cramps always made me feel good and have given me memories I will take to the grave. With heartfelt condolences to Ivy, thank you for all the great tunes and times. Lux, stay safe forever.

RAY FUCILLO — ADDRESS WITHHELD

THANKS for the fantastic Lux Interior tribute. My favourite magazine honouring my favourite woodoo/swampy/jungle/rock 'n' roller. The Cramps have been part of my psyche since the early '80s. Between them and my lifelong obsession with monsters and horror, it's been a great existence. Never rest in peace, Lux. This boring world won't be the same without you.

GARY J. HOFFART — TACOMA, WASHINGTON

THANK YOU for putting Lux Interior on the cover of your latest issue. I know that many Cramps fans are still saddened by his passing and I think it was truly a class act for *Rue Morgue* to acknowledge the original American monster man. The world is a much less interesting place without him in it.

ALABAMA SHARP — ADDRESS WITHHELD

THANK YOU! for the excellent interview with Pascal Laugier in *RM* #57. I thought *Martyrs* was a harrowing but fascinating film, and having read your interview with him, I only respect him more (if a *Heist* remake is inevitable, I feel far more confident with him at the helm). With films by charlatans and hacks like Robert "Rob Zombie" Cummings making up most of the "notable" offerings here in North America, it's refreshing and inspiring to see an active director with such an undeniable enthusiasm and love not just for the genre, but the intellectual sensibilities that fuel the greatest examples of it. As an eighteen-year-old American, I can't tell you how frustrating it is to see the genre I love passed off as solely juvenile, useless trash because most of this country's only exposure to it are some shitty remakes by

studios in it for a buck, and forgettable rehashes of '70s films by toothless imitators and phones. Then again, if you showed *Martyrs* in theatres here, people would likely call it a shitty version of *Saw* with subtitles. There is an honesty in the best of the horror genre seldom respected by modern directors, the general public and even a fair portion of its fans. Thank you *Rue Morgue* for respecting the genre as it should be and shining a spotlight on creators like Pascal who share that respect. It's one of the many reasons your magazine is the best there is at what it does. PS: Props for having such tolerant views towards LGBT people!

SCOTT DOUGLASS — MIDLAND PARK, NEW JERSEY

I HAVE NOW SEEN quite a few French horror films and I have to say that *Martyrs* was the best, even beating out *Irreversible* for me. I thought *Frontiers* was really good and *Melastique* and *Inside* were amazing! And *Min Blies Dag*. Then, after I watched *Martyrs*, I got *RM* #57 in the mail and read about it and was shocked, but not surprised. The fact that the director wasn't even going for a "real-life" belief system was incredible. I respect a person who says his is not a horrible film. So thank you, Pascal Laugier and *Rue Morgue* for once again, another cinematic experience.

KELLY PAQUETTE — CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND why you still review Mr. Stephen King's books, I mean after that car hit him, he said he's "done with horror." But yet you seem surprised when there's no blood in his books any more. Go figure.

W. JUSTISE — ADDRESS WITHHELD

BLOODY TYPICAL! One of the few issues of *Rue Morgue* that didn't find it's way into *Forbidden Planet* in Glasgow was issue 54. I just got 'round to ordering the back issue and got a nice surprise in the Audio Grimoire section — a review of our CD, *Mondo Franco*. On behalf of the *Mondo A Go-Go*, thanks so much for taking the time to listen to the CD and then going on to review it. It's great to know that in addition to covering films on the fringe of horror, you guys also support bands on the cusp of obscurity such as the Go-Go!

SEAN MCFEDRIES — GLASGOW SCOTLAND

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NEWS HIGHLIGHTS HORROR HAPPENINGS

CRAZIES REMAKE EXPANDS SCOPE OF ROMERO'S INFECTION STORY

Following in the infected footsteps of his classic zombie movies, George A. Romero's *The Crazies* is the latest of his films to be remade. Overture Films is taking its first step into horror territory with an \$18 million reimagining of the movie, which completed principal photography in Georgia and Iowa this spring. Breck Eisner (*Sahara*, *Fear Itself*) is directing and Timothy Olyphant (*Hitman*, *Deadwood*) stars as a small-town sheriff trying to maintain order in the midst of chaos. Other cast members include Radha Mitchell (*Rogue*, *Silent Hill*), Danielle Panabaker (*Friday the 13th* remake) and Joe Anderson (*The Ruins*). Romero is credited as Executive Producer on the film, but is not directly involved in its production.

As in the original, a mysterious viral outbreak sweeps through the population of a small town, causing the inhabitants to become irrational and violent; the military intervenes in an attempt to contain the outbreak before it becomes a pandemic. For Eisner, doing the remake was an opportunity to take advantage of a solid concept that Romero may not have had the resources to fully exploit.

"Anytime you do a remake or a re-imagining—and this is definitely more of a re-imagining—you want to target aspects of the original that they didn't have access to when they first made it," says Eisner. "One of the big limitations for Romero was obviously the budget. I think he had \$200,000 or \$275,000 to make the entire movie. We're obviously spending more money than that. ... We can represent the government on the scale that it needs to be in a movie like this, in a way that is oppressive and realistic."

In preparing for the shoot, Eisner did research with the Center for Disease Control

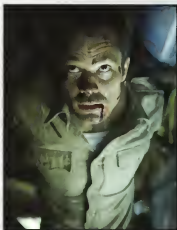
and the US military, consulting with them on how they would realistically attempt to contain such an outbreak and incorporating their operational guidelines into the film's storyline.

Along with Los Angeles effects house Almost Human (*Quarantine*, *The Burrowers*), Eisner designed an elaborate five-stage development of the disease. They used images of people suffering from Ebola, tetanus, rabies and Stevens-Johnson syndrome as reference points for their virus.

"The challenge for us was making [the infected] look interesting, making them look iconic, but not look like zombies, and not look so far over-the-top that you don't believe that it could be a sickness that made this happen," explains Eisner.

The filmmakers emphasize that their version is only loosely based on the original, and one of the distinct differences is the total absence of the military's point of view. In Romero's version, the film shifts back and forth between a volunteer fireman's attempts to navigate the chaos and an army colonel's bid to maintain order, reflecting Romero's own thematic cynicism towards authority. The 2009 version has a single protagonist who acts as the audience's sole perspective on the events: Sheriff David Dutton (Olyphant).

Olyphant says it was the script's bizarre title and the intensity of the story that first got him interested in the project.



Timothy Olyphant stars as a small-town sheriff in *The Crazies*.

"There was a pace to the movie that I really liked. There was this kind of nice, simple, 'things don't seem right, things seem worse, [snaps his fingers] things just get out of control, fast' story."

The Crazies is scheduled to be released in September, and both *Overture* and Eisner have other horror projects on the horizon. *Overture* will be producing the American remake of *Let the Right One In*, directed by *Cloverfield*'s Matt Reeves, and Eisner will be directing the remake of *Creature From the Black Lagoon*.

JASON LAPEYRE

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TORONTO'S LUMINATO FESTIVAL CELEBRATES POE'S 200TH BIRTHDAY

For a festival whose name invokes the concept of "light," Luminato is becoming quite dark this year. Toronto's third "festival of arts and creativity" (June 5 to 14) will offer more programming slanted towards gothic, fantasy and horror tastes than ever before, including an evening with Neil Gaiman and a variety of theatre, music, literature and film events celebrating the 200th birthday of Edgar Allan Poe.

A highlight of the Poe-themed programming is the new play *Nevermore: The Imaginary Life and Mysterious Death of Edgar Allan Poe*, produced by Edmonton's Catalyst Theatre. The production is being described as a "musical gothic fairy tale for adults" spun from Poe's concept of a dream within a dream.

"We wanted to tell the story of his life, but according to the logic of a dream," explains Catalyst's Jonathan Christensen, writer/director of *Nevermore*. "Imagine if you were reading a biography of Poe and then drifted off to sleep and imagined it."

Christensen cites the Poe comic adaptations by Kris Gensby as an influence on *Nevermore*'s visual style. Costume design features striped, frilly shirts and distressed, exposed hoop skirts partly constructed from found objects including dead tree branches. He explains that making the fashion "sort of the period, and sort of now" was part of his efforts to make Poe feel more contemporary.

"We really want to accentuate the sense of Poe as a young rebel, a weird, drag-addled rock star of the day. That's how he would have been seen at that time: alive, vibrant and dangerous," says Christensen. "Poe's life was ruled by chaos, he stands as an extreme example of how we can be our own worst enemy. Horror to me is about these extremes and contrasts - between comedy and tragedy, beauty and the grotesque. It's a blurry line and the work I want to do walks on that line."

It was, in fact, Catalyst's previous horror production, *Frankenstein*, which sparked Luminato's current turn towards terror.

"I had been watching Catalyst explore the macabre, darker side of theatre," explains Luminato's Artistic Director Chris Lorway. "When they proposed a Poe project, we co-



Nevermore: Scott Shepley stars as Poe in this musical gothic fairy tale for adults.

commissioned it. And when we realized it was the 200th anniversary of his birthday, we thought, 'Now that we have this anchor, what else?'"

The answer was authors Patrick McGrath (*Spider*), Bram Stoker Award-winner Sarah Langan (*The Missing*) and Monique Proxix (*Wildlives*), who Lorway says will read about "the mysterious, the unknown, dementia - all the things we love about Poe" at Luminato's Gothic Fiction event June 6. Furthermore, the fest commissioned local authors to pen and read new ghost stories about Toronto, which will be collected into a chapbook that will only be sold at the Gothic Toronto event June 10. Neil Gaiman's presentation of his award-winning children's tale *The Graveyard Book* (June 8) sold out immediately.

Scary music events at Luminato will include A Poe Cabaret, a vaudeville evening of new classical music, featuring the Canadian Premiere of a *Tell-Tale Heart* opera by NYC's Lance Home (June 8-10); a free screening of *Tales of the Uncanny*, the 1919 German horror anthology flick with live music accompaniment by experimental electronic artist Robert Lippok (June 11); and *Addicted to Bad Ideas* (June 12), a "multimedia punk operetta" about horror film icon Peter Lorre.

Considering that Luminato has a reputation as a mainstream, family-friendly extravaganza, the amount of genre content this year is surprising, but Lorway believes it's part of a bigger shift in art worldwide, due to forces such as the recession. He notes, "As a curator, seeing this trend is exciting: people are searching through darkness for the light."

For more info and tickets, visit luminato.com.

LISA LADOUCEUR



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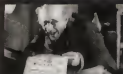


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video.yahoo.com/watch/43743571/12669304
Meet Neil Swink, a rather ambitious fellow who spent (according to the info provided on the site along with this video) "three thousand, six hundred and fifty days" re-scoring 1922's *Nosferatu* with Black Sabbath music from 1970 through 1989. Was this labor of love worth it? Time is and judge for yourself.

erle-caterle.blogspot.com

An online blog that devotes as much space to horror literature as horror movies? A rarity indeed, but that's exactly what *The Erle Caterle* is. Run by a pair of bookstore owners who go by the online handles Marik and *The Nobody*, this site delivers a wealth of valuable news and reviews, as well as enough horror-related links to keep you surfing for days.

thedesignblog.org/entry/shelves-for-life-and-death

If you're looking to reduce your environmental footprint, designer Willem Wonen has a unique idea: his shelving system, *Shelves for Life*, can be dismantled after your death and turned into a coffin. Visit the website to see photos of the unit and a blueprint of how it all works. Now you can take it with you when you die!

haikucomics.com

Last year in *RM* #83 we reviewed a book of zombie haiku; if that tickled your feralish fancy, just wait until you get a load of *haikucomics.com*, which takes the concept even further and melds haiku poetry with gritty black and white horror comics. Terribly clever and surprisingly compelling, the site features new 'toons three times weekly.

theshamrockital.blogspot.com

Fervently devoted to pre-Comics Code funny books, this Rando-nomiated website regularly posts scans of all those vintage four-color titles that caused the hysteria that resulted in the formation of the Comics Code Authority in 1954. Click any image for a full-size, readable version of the page and delve in. Horror history awaits.

Compiled by MONICA S. KUEBLER

Got a Roadkill suggestion? Email a link to roadkill@time-magazine.com

STOKER AWARDS RETURNS TO BURBANK WITH MATHESONS, GARRIS AND BRAUNBECK IN LINEUP

The Bram Stoker Awards are once again going solo when the event returns to Burbank, California June 12-14 for its 22nd annual installment. While the Awards – presented annually by the Horror Writers Association (HWA) – paired up with the World Horror Convention for the past two years, this year the organizers have planned their own three-day event. (World Horror took place in Winnipeg, Manitoba this past May).

"Although we were thrilled to be allied with World Horror in 2007 and 2008, HWA started hearing two things from its members after those events: they want more business opportunities at our yearly gathering, and they wanted to explore areas like film more," explains co-organizer Lisa Morton about the impetus behind the split. "Given that we'd had a successful stand-alone Stoker event in Burbank in 2005, it just seemed like a no-brainer to return there for 2009."

In addition to hosting the prestigious Bram Stoker Awards that celebrate superior achievement in horror writing (fiction, non-fiction and poetry), the three-day event also boasts an impressive lineup of author and industry guests, as well as a full roster of horror-related events programming.

This year's special guests include Richard Matheson (*I Am Legend*) and his son, Richard Christian Matheson (*Scars and Other Distinguishing Marks*), John Farris (*You Don't Scare Me*), award-winning editor David Hartwell, director/screenwriter Mick Garris, illustrator Harry O. Morris, Gary A. Braunbeck (*Coffin County*), Gauntlet Press' Barry Hoffman, as well as Lifetime Achievement Award recipients F. Paul Wilson (*The Keep*) and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro (*Midnight Harvest*), and Specialty Press winners Larry and Debra Roberts of Bloodletting Press.

"One of the things we want to do is have sessions devoted to our Guests of Honour and Lifetime Achievement Award winners," says co-organizer John Little of some of the weekend's more intimate

events. "These will be set up as informal conversations that will allow them to talk about their history in the field. [While] the regular panels will cover topics of interest to both writers and fans, ranging from different approaches to take with publishers [to] marketing in a recession, new media and many other topics."

There will also be an opportunity for aspiring authors to present story ideas to a variety of industry insiders in the form of pitch sessions. Writers can sign up for a maximum of two pitch meetings through the event's official website at stokers2009.org.

"Pitch sessions are a chance for a writer to sit down for one-on-one time with an editor, an agent or a film producer," explains Morton. "During the session, the author briefly relates the story they are trying to sell, hoping to interest the other party enough to agree to read the full work, with, of course, the end result hopefully being a deal and money! Working with our pitch coordinator Jeannie Worthen, I think we've put together the best pitch sessions ever at this event – we've got everything from mass market publishers to literary agents to mega-star film producer [Don Murphy: *Transformers*, *From Hell*]."

The Stoker Awards Weekend is not just geared towards horror professionals, however. Fans are also welcome at the event, which includes a mass autograph signing at genre bookstore Dark Delicacies and a dealer's room brimming with hot-off-the-presses releases and used books, as well as hard-to-find paperbacks and hardcovers for more discerning collectors.

"[Fans will] get to meet and talk to some of their favourite authors, get autographs and listen to them read from their work," says Little. "We're arranging *kaffeeklatchers* where a small group of fans can sit and talk to some of the best authors in the field. They'll get to see the Stoker Awards being presented, including the fabulous Jeff Strand as Master of Ceremonies. On top of that we've got four parties planned. Everybody's going to have a great time."

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✂ Researchers in Italy recently uncovered the 16th-century burial site of a woman who was believed to be a vampire by the people who interred her. Her skeleton was found with a brick wedged in its jaw, superstition demanded that "vampires" be buried with something inedible in their mouths so they would not be able to get sustenance and rise.

✂ Before Tod Browning was hired to direct *Freaks*, the project was intended to be a vehicle for Lon Chaney, but he died before it could be made.

✂ A 50-year-old British man, David Phipps, recently committed suicide by cutting his own head off with a chainsaw that he secured to a piece of furniture – because his Hampshire flat was scheduled for demolition.

✂ Tim Burton counts Mario Bava's *Black Sunday* among his favourite horror films; he pays homage to it several times in *Sleepy Hollow*.

✂ It is estimated that four per cent of the world's population is psychopathic.

✂ Bruce Lee died from an allergic reaction to aspirin, but various Hong Kong news agencies reported other causes of death, including poisoning, a martial arts "death touch" and murder by a secret organization.

✂ In March, students at the prestigious Boston Latin School, founded in 1635, starting emailing the press claiming that their campus had vampires and that a student had been bitten. Both the police and school officials deny an attack took place.

✂ Actor Robert Quarry (Count Yorga, Vampire) was hired as the body double for Basil Rathbone for 1944's *The Spider Woman*. However, he was let go after refusing to do a scene in which tarantulas would crawl on him.

✂ An old Irish superstition dictates that a man can make himself "irresistible" to a woman by sewing a piece of her hair through the leg of a dead body.

✂ During the 1980s, the National Coalition on TV Violence published a study reporting that almost twice as many children aged ten to thirteen could recognize Freddy Krueger as could recognize Abraham Lincoln.

✂ A Philadelphia pet store recently placed an order to restock its tropical fish and salt water supplies but was delivered a corpse instead. According to the airline that handled the packages, there had been a miscommunication with the delivery driver.

✂ Before the 1841 publication of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" there were no detective stories. Poe essentially invented the subgenre.

✂ More than \$13 billion is spent on funerals in the US each year.

Compiled by MONICA S. KIBLER

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THE RUE MORGUE SICK TOP SIX



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FLESH-EATING FLORA
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ROBBIE'S TERRIBLE TREE
3. **CREEPSHOW**
JORDY'S METEOR SHIT SUIT
4. **THE EVIL DEAD**
RAPED BY ROOTS
5. **WAR OF THE WORLDS (2005)**
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THE LORD OF LEGENDARY THINGS

RAY HARRYHAUSEN

BROUGHT TO LIFE SOME OF THE MOST MEMORABLE CINEMATIC CREATURES

THROUGH THE ART OF STOP-MOTION MODEL ANIMATION.

DECADES LATER, HIS WORK CONTINUES TO FASCINATE.

IN A BRAND NEW INTERVIEW, ROL ANDROSKE PAYS TRIBUTE TO...

BY PAUL CORUPE

WHEN IT COMES TO CINEMA'S MOST ASTOUNDING CREATURES AND THE WORLDS THEY POPULATE

It's impossible not to recall the work of Ray Harryhausen. His handmade, hand-painted, hand-animated creations in the 1950s and '60s set a gold standard in movie monster magic that has yet to be surpassed. At a time when stuntmen in ill-designed rubber suits or giant reptiles passed for horrifying screen creatures, Harryhausen emerged as a disciplined craftsman who created living sculptures for the cinema in unforgettable films such as *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, *Earth vs. The Flying Saucers*, *20 Million Miles to Earth*, *Jason and the Argonauts* and *Clash of the Titans*.

Building on stop-motion techniques developed by Willis O'Brien in *The Lost World* and *King Kong*, Harryhausen developed and created effects for more than a dozen extraordinary creature features. Merging flights of imagination and reality into the same frame, he often went beyond horror and science fiction into the realm of fantasy, fairy tales and adventure, but his work was always immediately recognizable and distinctly his own.

Today the 88-year-old Harryhausen is synonymous with stop-motion animation, a technique in which the illusion of movement is given to an inanimate object by making slight adjustments and shooting it one frame of film at a time.

Drawing inspiration for his creations from sources as varied as Greek mythology, prehistoric horrors and even real-life elephants and horses, Harryhausen meticulously researched his subjects to make them as lifelike as possible. But more than just replicating precise structural elements, he also imparted his subjects with personality. His graceful,

sometimes tragic, creations evoked both sympathy and awe, such as *20 Million Miles to Earth*'s scaly behemoth, displaced Venusian visitor the Ymir.

Born June 29, 1920 in Los Angeles, a young Harryhausen fell under the spell of fantasy fiction, dinosaurs and 1933's *King Kong*. Intrigued by the magic behind the skyscraper-scaling ape, Harryhausen taught himself the fundamentals of stop-motion animation by experimenting with a 16mm camera on miniature sets and models he constructed in his parents' garage. Determined to follow in the steps of *King Kong* animator O'Brien, Harryhausen brought his preliminary drawings and sketches alive by designing articulated metal armatures. These were then machined by his father, covered in latex rubber and painted. His mother even sewed costumes for some of his early figures.

Based on the strength of his experiments, he landed a job working on producer George Pal's *Puppetoons*, a film series made throughout the '40s that animated carved wooden puppets. After the Second World War (during which he worked on army orientation movies under maverick director Frank Capra) Harryhausen set his sights on a career in Hollywood. Armed with a handful of ambitious fairy tale shorts (*The Mother Goose Stories*), he soon landed a job alongside his hero O'Brien, animating the titular giant ape in *Mighty Joe Young* (1949).

From there, Harryhausen began work on the highly influential 1953 creature feature *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, based on a story by his good friend Ray Bradbury. Harryhausen designed a fictional dinosaur called the Rhedosaurus, which is awakened from its arctic deep sea slumber by nuclear tests. Although he didn't know it at the time, this film would unlock the door for an invasion of giant insects, reptiles and puddles of diaphanous goo bent on global destruction.

RHEDOSAURUS

THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS (1953)

KNOWN FOR: STOMPING NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS, KILLING SOLDIERS WITH ITS IRRADIATED BLOOD.

THE YMIR

20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH (1957)

KNOWN FOR: ARRIVING FROM VENUS FOR A BITE OF ITALIAN(S).

Harryhausen ventured deeper into the genre he helped establish after meeting Columbia producer Charles H. Schneer, with whom he would collaborate for more than 25 years. Shot in black and white for little money, Harryhausen's next films — *It Came From Beneath the Sea*, *20 Million Miles to Earth* and *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* — were retoolists, entertaining efforts that still stand as some of the most inventive B-movies of the decade. Few viewers forget the spectacle of *It Came From Beneath the Sea*'s giant octopus destroying the Golden Gate Bridge with its powerful tentacles, or the strange, whirling UFOs smashing into the Capitol building dome — apocalyptic visions rendered in meticulous stop-motion animation.

But for all Harryhausen's pioneering work as the godfather of the creature-runs-amok trend, he received more accolade for rendering the heroism and grotesque villainy of classical legends. His first colour feature, 1958's *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*, kicked off a trilogy of adventure stories that starred the daring Arabian Nights sailor battling a two-headed Roc, a horned dragon, and what some have hailed as the greatest movie monster ever created, the Cyclops. Similarly, fan-favourite *Jason and the Argonauts* mined Greek mythology and brought to life an army of sword-fighting skeletons, a hydra and Talos, a massive bronze sculpture.

Though Harryhausen "officially" retired from filmmaking after 1983's *Clash of the Titans*, his legend continues to grow. Just as he had once been entranced by O'Brien's work on *King Kong*, his own epic visions and love of creatures has inspired a new generation of filmmakers, including Steven Spielberg, Tim Burton, Sam Raimi (the deadbeat skeletons in *Army of Darkness*) and John Landis, as well as special effect artists such as Rick Baker (*An American Werewolf*

in *London*), Stan Winston (*Jurassic Park*), Phil Tippett (*Skins*), *Whoopie*) and J.M. Dennis Muren (*Star Wars*). Though the art of stop-motion has largely been trumped by 21st-century digital effects, the principles that Harryhausen helped develop and define continue to live on in the dinosaurs of *Jurassic Park*, the unstoppable robots of *The Terminator* franchise and the incredible creatures of *Hellboy* and *Pan's Labyrinth* (director Guillermo Del Toro has even referred to *Hellboy 2* as "a Harryhausen movie").

Perhaps because of the wide-reaching effects of his work, Harryhausen's long journey and constantly evolving approach to the art of animation has been well documented. He and co-writer Tony Dalton penned an extensive career overview, including notes on *3 Worlds of Gulliver*, *The Valley of Gwangi* and *First Men in the Moon* in their excellent, well-illustrated autobiography *Ray Harryhausen: An Animated Life* (2003). Just as insightful, British author Mike Hankus's *Ray Harryhausen: Master of the Majiks* is a lavish, three-volume biography loaded with photos and artwork (see p.24).

More than five decades since his lumbering apes and raging dinosaurs first appeared on theatre screens, Harryhausen's work continues to thrill and fascinate viewers. His early masterpieces *20 Million Miles to Earth*, *It Came From Beneath the Sea* and *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* were among the first classic horror and sci-fi films to be released on Blu-ray, and Harryhausen is still active, researching and promoting stop-motion. He has just released his third book with Dalton, *A Century of Stop-Motion Animation From Melies to Aardman*.

The legendary animator took a break to talk to *Rue Morgue* from his home in London about his inspirations, his legacy, the importance of balancing stories with special effects and the film industry's increasing reliance on CGI.

DESTROYED
WASHINGTON
WITH FLYING
SAUCERS.
NEW YORK WITH
THE BEAST FROM
20,000 FATHOMS
AND ROME WITH
THE YMIIR IN
20 MILLION
MILES TO EARTH.
RAY HARRYHAUSEN



IT'S TUGH FOR MODERN AUDIENCES TO FULLY APPRECIATE THE IMPACT THAT THE LOST WORLD AND KING KONG HAD ON MOVIEGOERS. CAN YOU DESCRIBE HOW YOU WERE AFFECTED BY THESE EARLY STOP-MOTION ENTERTAINERS?

Well, we know dinosaurs actually existed, because we can see their bones in the museum, but you can't exactly go out to the jungle and photograph one. While O'Brien found another way to bring them to life in *The Lost World* in 1925, and he made those dinosaurs the real stars of the film, I saw *The Lost World* when I was three. Or maybe I was five... I can't remember that far back. [laughs] *King Kong* also did this in such a believable way — nothing like that had been put on the screen, and there has never been another picture like it since. I saw it at Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood and it expressed me enormously because it was so different.

SO THAT WAS WHAT ORIGINALLY INSPIRED YOU TRYING TO BRING THE BEASTS TO LIFE?

Yes, I didn't know how the effect was done, but I made it my duty to find out. It took a long time — there wasn't any "eureka!" discovery, but an evolution that occurred over the years. There were no books on the subject, so I just had to experiment and use trial and error.



OF COURSE, IN YOUR NEW BOOK WITH TONY DALTON, *A CENTURY OF STOP-MOTION ANIMATION*, YOU SHOW THE TECHNIQUE IS ACTUALLY OLDER THAN MOST PEOPLE THOUGHT.

It's right, stop-motion animation dates back beyond

Georges Melies [the turn-of-the-century French filmmaker who made *A Trip to the Moon*], he experimented with the process, although the film is apparently lost. But he did other things, like intercutting two pieces of film together so that a car will go across the screen to a certain point and all of a sudden turn into a different machine. Melies

may be the most well-known early filmmaker who used it, but people experimented with stop-motion using teddy bears and toys even before him.

ALTHOUGH YOU HAD MODESTLY ANIMATED CREATURES AND DINOSAURS IN YOUR EARLY SHORTS, YOUR FIRST PROFESSIONAL JOB WAS SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT: A CAMPAIGN TO SELL LIFE SIZE MOVIE TOYS.

Yes, that was my first professional job, but that wasn't what I really wanted to do. It wasn't until I got to do *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* that that happened. All in all, I made sixteen features over my career, fifteen of which I did all the animation for myself.

THE ONE YOU DIDN'T DO BY YOURSELF WAS KING OF HISTORIES THOUGH, *BECAUSE* EVEN THE BEASTS OF YOUR *ARMY OF DARKNESS* WERE CREATED BY YOU.

Yes, I had the great pleasure of working with him and [King Kong co-director] Merian C. Cooper on *Myth: Joe Young* [1949]. That film had a lot of very complicated scenes, a lot of miniature rear-projection and matte paintings. Of course, many years later I collaborated again with O'Brien on Irwin Allen's *The Animal World* [1956].

EVEN THOUGH *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG* WAS THE DESIGN FOR SPECIAL EFFECTS IN YOUR STOP-MOTION DIDN'T REALLY CATCH ON. WHY NOT?



CYCLOPS
THE 7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD (1958)
KNOWN FOR: WRESTLING GIANT LIZARDS, ATTRACTING SPEARS, HAVING A SINGULAR VIEW OF THE WORLD.

TALOS
JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS (1963)
KNOWN FOR: OPENING A 100-FOOT-TALL BRONZE CAN OF WHUP-ASS WHEN THIEVES TRY TO STEAL ZEUS' TREASURE.



With *Avatar*, Cameron's vision of a fantastical world of intelligent, friendly aliens and a hostile, warlike planet has become a reality. **BY JEFF LABRECQUE**

Well, most people didn't quite understand the process of stop-motion animation at that time, and a lot of producers didn't want to spend that type of money. I remember when I took my drawings of *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* to one producer, Edward Small, I couldn't get past the secretary! After he saw the success of the film, however, he made a third-rare stop-motion movie called *Jack the Giant Killer*. And of course he hired everyone who worked on *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*, except the very person who created it [laughs]. So, I went out of my way to prove it wasn't a time-consuming and expensive process, which is why I worked on many low-budget films at the beginning of my career. For example, *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* only cost \$250,000. You couldn't get a costume for that today!

THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS WAS A PIONEERING FILM WITH SOME GREAT VISUAL EFFECTS, BUT FILM ALSO HEAVILY ENJOYED BEING THE MODEL CITY DESTROYER, SOMETHING THAT YOU WOULD DO REVENUE TOURS IN THE 1950S.

I know! I got fed up of destroying all these different places. I destroyed Washington with flying saucers, New York with *The Beast* and Rome with *Year in 20 Million Miles to Earth*. For that one, we made new ruins among the old. It did get tedious, particularly when Godzilla got on the bandwagon, which borrowed a lot from *The Beast* from 20,000 Fathoms. But you know, I always thought stop-motion worked better than

the rubber suits if you just take a man and put him in a *Tyrannosaurus rex* costume, all the joints bend the wrong way! [Laughs]

ANOTHER INTERESTING ANIMATION THAT WAS A LITTLE DIFFERENT FOR YOU WAS THE MITCHIE IN EARTH '65: THE FLYING SAUCERS, SINCE THEY WERE NON-ORGANIC OBJECTS. WAS THAT A SPECIAL ANIMATION?

Yes, that was a challenge, but I enjoyed it. I wanted to try to make the saucers look like they were operated by some sort of intelligence. Other sci-fi films that had a saucer in them, they would use a matte painting or something like that. We used the saucers throughout the entire film, animation can do that so cleverly.

THE OTHER CREATURE FEATURES YOU DID IN COLUMBIA, IT CAME FROM LENGTHY TALKS AND 30 MILLION MILES TO EARTH ARE DISTINCTIVE EXAMPLES OF 1950S SCIENCE-FICTION FILMS. DID YOU EVER TO YOUR STOP-MOTION CREATURE EFFORTS IN YOUR VIEW, HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR THE AUDIENCE TO BE HAPPY WITH THE MONSTERS?
Well, we don't want them to be just mad things that go around destroying everything. We try to give them a little sympathy. I got that from *Kong Kong*, when he was shot off the top of the Empire State Building. People used to cry because it was pathetic, because man destroys things he doesn't understand.

SO IT WAS MORE THAN JUST THE EFFECTS IN MAKING THEM LOOK LIKE FILM?

Yes, that also expressed me and showed that you



**PREHISTORIC SEA-GIANT RAGES AGAINST CITY!
A THRILL STORY BEYOND ALL IMAGINING!**



THE SKELETON ARMY JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS

KNOWN FOR: RISING OUT OF THE EARTH TO WAGE FIERCE BATTLES, NOT MAKING THE SWIM TEAM.

HYDRA JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS

KNOWN FOR: PROVING THAT SEVEN HEADS ARE ALMOST BETTER THAN ONE WHEN GUARDING THE GOLDEN FLEECE.





A BRIEF HISTORY OF STOP-MOTION ANIMATION BY JASON PICHONSKY

SOME OF THE BIGGEST THRILLS IN THE HISTORY OF CINEMA HAVE COME FROM THE SPECTACLES OF GIANT CREATURES WREAKING HAVOC. SO IT'S IRONIC THAT MOST OF THESE "BEHEMOTHS" WERE ACTUALLY ANIMATED PUPPETS LESS THAN A FOOT TALL.

These mini-Golaths are a testament to the genre's most meticulous and time-consuming special effect: the frame-by-frame art of stop-motion animation.

Stop-motion animation developed in the earliest days of moving picture trickery. In 1896, French filmmaker and former magician Georges Méliès (*A Trip to the Moon*) discovered the substitution method of making objects appear to disappear on film. He would stop the camera, remove or replace the subject, then start the camera rolling again; the effect would create the illusion of a magician's apprentice disappearing in a puff of smoke. Building on Méliès' discovery, former cartoonist J. Stuart Blackton made *The Humpty Dumpty Circus* (1898). The now-lost film featured toy animals marching around the screen as if by their own volition. By starting and stopping the camera successively while moving the toys between each exposure, Blackton created the first stop-motion film. He would use the effect again in 1907's *Haunted Hotel*. While most of the ghostly effects were achieved practically with wires, one scene presented a dinner consumed by invisible hands. Shot in close-up, Blackton used stop-motion to achieve the then-baffling effect of wine being poured and sausages sliced by ghostly intervention.

Then, in 1915, fueled by his love of prehistoric creatures, visual effects pioneer Willis O'Brien set out to develop a way to bring these beasts to life. Aware of early stop-motion techniques, he realized that model dinosaurs on miniature sets could be posed one frame at a time to create a credible facsimile of the real thing. Utilizing puppets modelled in clay, O'Brien created a number of short comedies for Thomas Edison, including *The Dinosaur and the Missing Link: A Prehistoric Tragedy* (1916) and *The Ghost of Slumber Mountain* (1918). On the strength of these projects, O'Brien was offered the effects work on a 1925 silent film adaptation of *The Lost World*. In the film he successfully combined dinosaur models and live-action humans, often within a single shot. *The Lost World's* author, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, was so convinced by O'Brien's dinosaur imagery that he tried to pass off snippets of the footage as real to the Society of American Magicians. *The Lost World* was a hit, which helped

O'Brien secure a development deal for his own project, called *Creation*. Yet, despite a year of pre-production and numerous completed animation tests, the film was never made, due in part to escalating costs and the intrusion of producer Mervyn C. Cooper. Then head of production at RKO, Cooper had plans for his own epic and felt that he had found the missing ingredient: O'Brien's visual effects work.

So, armed with the dinosaur models from *Creation*, O'Brien began work on Cooper's new motion picture — *King Kong*. Released in 1933, the tale of a giant gorilla with a thing for blondies would forever change visual effects in movies. With this single film O'Brien developed a groundwork that artists have been building on ever since. His expertise and artistry created a convincing and emotive King out of an eighteen-inch model.

A thirteen-year-old Ray Harryhausen saw *King Kong* that year and it changed his life. He would spend years studying the film with the dream of becoming the next Willis O'Brien (or "O'Be" as he was affectionately known). After making his own stop-motion home movie before getting into the film business, Harryhausen got a chance to work with his role model on the softer-and-gentler giant gorilla movie *Mighty Joe Young* (1949).

While Harryhausen's career flourished, O'Brien's was beset with heartbreak. After losing two sons at the hands of a suicidal ex-wife during production of the sequel *The Son of Kong*, O'Brien spent most of his remaining time developing projects that would never be produced. In later years he found himself working on low-budget B-movies such as *The Black Scorpion* (1957), often creating the effects in his garage, or simply lending his name to projects to increase their credibility. Ironically, his final film credit (as an "effects technician") was on the 1969 remake of *The Lost World*, which replaced stop-motion dinosaurs with actual reptiles in costumes.

Although stop-motion was slow to take off with producers, Harryhausen popularized it in the '50s with his work on movies such as *The Beast From 50,000 Fathoms* (1953) and *It Came from Beneath the Sea* (1955). He often referred to his photo-realistic stop-motion techniques as "model animation" in order to set it apart from its stop-motion cartoon counterparts, and over the next two decades, with his newly branded "dynamation" films *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* and *Jason and the Argonauts*, Harryhausen dominated the field.



Inspired by the work of O'Brien and Harryhausen, a new crop of acolyte animators emerged in the '70s. Soon-to-be visual-effects gurus Dennis Muren, Jim Danforth and David Allen joined forces to produce the Harryhausen effects homage *The Ewok: A Journey into the Supernatural*. Funded and directed by Muren (who later worked on *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones*), the film emulated many of the camera tricks found in the dynamism moves of the '60s, bringing to life giants and winged "Tarlek" demons. Already seasoned professionals at the time, Danforth (who did creature animation for *The Outer Limits*) and Allen (who worked on various TV commercials, including one for Volkswagen that featured King Kong) would team up again on the Hammer production *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth* (1971), a sequel of sorts to the earlier Harryhausen-Hammer film *One Million Years B.C.* (1966). Later, Danforth got a chance to apprentice under his idol Harryhausen animating Pegasus the winged horse in the 1981 film *Clash of the Titans*, while Allen spent much of his later career creating the effects for Charles Band's Full Moon production company, including *The Puppet Master* films.

By the '80s, stop-motion model animation began to suffer from B-movieitis. In the face of the era's more sophisticated practical and makeup effects, audiences sought more realism in their gargantuan monsters. No matter the skill with which an animator handled the puppet, stop-motion had become seen as an effect used in old drive-in movies or camp films. Both *The Howling* (1981) and *The Thing* (1982) had shot stop-motion sequences that were discarded from the final cuts. The Blair-monster (created by Randy Cook) was dropped from the finale of *The Thing* because director John Carpenter felt it just wasn't convincing.

In an effort to bring more realism to stop-motion, Phil Tippett, an artist working at George Lucas' effects company ILM, introduced "go motion" to big-budget theatrical features. His new process was put to the test during the tourbillon sequences in *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). The technique used a computer-controlled rod puppet that moved while a frame was ex-

Stop-Motion Commemorative: Randy Cook's unused Blair-monster made for *The Thing*, and (opposite) the famous T. Rex fight in *King Kong*

posed with the aid of a motion-control motor. This created a blur of motion that was often lacking in model animation. Tippett's technique was perfected in *Dragonslayer* (1981), bringing new realism to the film's dragons.

Director Sam Rami would give Harryhausen one final homage in 1992 when he used many of the master's visual effects techniques in *Army of Darkness*. The skeletal deadies were directly inspired by the skeleton warriors from Harryhausen's *Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* and *Jason and the Argonauts*.

When *Jurassic Park* arrived in 1993, it marked the death of the model animation effects feature. Tippett's now refined go motion technique was considered for the dinosaurs but was dropped in favour of the quickly maturing computer graphics animation (CGI) technology. The effects created for *Jurassic Park* (the film itself an homage to the mighty Willis O'Brien's work) stunned audiences as much as *King Kong* had in the '30s. Even Harryhausen fanatic and former animator Tim Burton dropped his planned stop-motion Marlon for *Mars Attacks!* (1996) in favour of CGI aliens. (Burton had used stop-motion to great effect in 1983's *Beetle Juice*). CGI was the new king.

Yet the legacy of stop-motion has been preserved. *The Pit and the Pendulum* (2006) was the first in a planned series of stop-motion Edgar Allan Poe shorts under the banner of "Ray Harryhausen presents," in which he serves as an executive producer. The art also lives on in the mainstream releases *The Corpse Bride* and *Coraline*, as well as in the surreal feature films of European animators Jan Svankmajer (*Little Otik*), Walerian Borowczyk and American-born surrealists Brothers Quay (*The Piano Tuner of Earthquake*), who have incorporated live-action and stop-motion to award-winning effect. Even the computer-generated monsters that populate recent creative features such as *The Host*, *Cloverfield* and *The Mist* are just the next step in the evolution of behemoths—cousins to the stop-motion monsters imagined years earlier by pioneers Willis O'Brien, Ray Harryhausen and their creature-loving disciples. 🐉



OF ALCHEMISTS PAST

A CENTURY OF STOP-MOTION ANIMATION — FROM MÉLIÈS TO AARDMAN

by Ray Harryhausen and Tony Dalton
Watson Guppi

It has long been accepted that the technical principles of stop-motion animation were discovered accidentally in 1896 by the great Georges Méliès when his camera momentarily jammed whilst filming a Parisian street scene, inventing the practice of repositioning objects in between exposed frames of film to create the illusion of movement. However, an earlier, more macabre example of stop-motion has since surfaced in Thomas Edison's 1895 film *The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots*, where the technique was utilized to depict Mary's decapitation. Shortly before the guillotine blade dropped, the film was stopped and a dummy substituted for the actor.

These are just a couple of the many facts that Ray Harryhausen and Tony Dalton unearth for the first-ever comprehensive history of stop-motion animation. As the title proclaims, this volume (their third collaboration in six years) examines over 100 years of the art form, from early pioneers James Stuart Blackton (*The Haunted*

Hotel) and Willis O'Brien (*King Kong*), to Harryhausen contemporaries Jim Danforth (*Jack the Giant Killer*), Czech animator Jirí Trnka (*The Hand*), and modern-day masters Dennis Muren (*Eragon*), Nick Park (*Wallace & Gromit in The Curse of the Were Rabbit*) and Tim Burton (*The Corpse Bride*).

Of course, space limitations prevent a complete discussion of all who have dabbled in this cinematic alchemy, and while some lesser-known practitioners are given their due, regrettably, there's no mention whatsoever of the likes of the Brothers Quay or the great Jan Svankmajer, who is easily one of the greatest stop-motion innovators. Still, the omissions are forgivable thanks to the embarrassment of riches that lie within these 240 richly illustrated and insightful pages. *A Century of Stop Motion Animation* — From Méliès to Aardman is a loving tribute to the brotherhood (and sisterhood) of dedicated, patient geniuses who've mastered cinema's most magical craft.

STUART F. ANDREWS

A CENTURY
OF
STOP
MOTION
ANIMATION



HOW MUCH INPUT DID YOU HAVE ON THE STORIES TO THESE FILMS?

Well, our films were made very differently. The producer, Charles H. Schneer, the writer and I would basically lay out the scenarios, and then the writer would be it all together. We worked together to make a logical story that the audience would believe. We also did a lot of research, especially on *Jason and the Argonauts* and *Clash of the Titans*. Greek mythology is very fragmented, so we stole certain aspects of the *Heracles* and *Medusa* legends. *Clash of the Titans* is actually the famous story of *Perseus* and *Andromeda*. Of course, they don't teach this stuff in the schools anymore.

ONE OF THE THINGS THAT I'VE GREAT ABOUT THE HERACLES TRILOGY AND THE FILMS YOU DID ON CLASSIC MYTHOLOGY IS HOW WELL THE EFFECTS SEEMED TO BE INTEGRATED INTO THE STORY.

We would take a month, maybe several months, to prepare a film's story and go out of our way to introduce the characters. We had strong plots — sometimes profound plots. Still, we often got criticism saying that they were too simple. But you can't make complicated stories out of fairy tales.

OF ALL YOUR FILMS, I THINK JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS IS THE

ONE THAT EVERYBODY LIKES BEST. ESPECIALLY THE FINAL SEQUENCE IN WHICH SEVEN SKELETONS RISE FROM THE GROUND AND FIGHT JASON AND TWO OF HIS MEN. WAS THAT THE MOST DIFFICULT EFFECT TO PUT INTO THE FILM?

Yes, it was the most time-consuming and difficult one I did in my career. I tried to avoid taking too long because it irritates the people who finance the film, but sometimes I would only get thirteen frames in a day because I had to synchronize it to match the live action. But I got the most fan mail about *Jason and the Argonauts*. The skeleton fight is the best, most well-known sequence that I have ever done.

THE SCORES SEEMED TO REALLY HELP BRING MANY ANIMATED SCENES TO LIFE. HOW MUCH INPUT DID YOU HAVE INTO THAT? CREATING THEM? IN JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS?

Of course, every studio had a



MINOTON

SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER (1977)

KNOWN FOR: BRONZED BODY, BULL'S HEAD, CHAMPION ROWING SKILLS

TROG

SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER

KNOWN FOR: OPENING GIANT DOORS FOR PEOPLE AND BATTLING THE SABRE-WOLF



“WE NEVER CALLED THEM ‘MONSTERS,’ WE CALLED THEM ‘MISUNDERSTOOD CREATURES.’”

RAY HARRYHAUSEN

sound effects department, and they would usually give us three or four selections to listen to. Charles and I would choose something suitable for that particular character. For Totos, we wanted to have the sound of twisted metal, and they gave us several concepts of possible noises.

ANOTHER MEMORABLE ANIMATION WAS THE CRAB IN *THE CRAB*. I LIKE WHICH WASN'T A MODEL, BUT A REAL CRAB WE PUT ON A FILM STRIP.

Yes — I got the crab at [London department store] Harrods, and we had it humanely killed and dissected. After we shot the sequence, we had a nice crab dinner! Alfred Hitchcock would have been pleased — he always used to say that he hated actors! [Laughs]

FROM *THE AGE OF THE EMERALD SMITH* (THE EMERALD MENSAURUS IS I CAN'T PICK ONE, BECAUSE THE OTHERS GET JEALOUS! BUT I LIKE THE MORE COMPLICATED ONES, SUCH AS MEDUSA IN *CLASH OF THE TITANS*). All the research I did on her just showed a woman with a pretty face with snakes in her hair. So I made her quite different, and gave her a snake's body.

FROM *THE AGE OF THE EMERALD SMITH* (THE EMERALD MENSAURUS IS I CAN'T PICK ONE, BECAUSE THE OTHERS GET JEALOUS! BUT I LIKE THE MORE COMPLICATED ONES, SUCH AS MEDUSA IN *CLASH OF THE TITANS*).

Really? We never tried to frighten anyone! Of course, Grimm's Fairy tales are frightening too! We tried to keep it very atmospheric. We did it in an airplane hanger, you know. I think the whole sequence is quite interesting put together. The music helps make it a highlight — you have to have the right kind of music.

YOUR WORKING STYLE WASN'T VERY HIGHLY ORGANIZED.

Very important, because we kept a minimum of dialogue and a maximum of action and impression. Like on *King Kong* they had this wonderful Max Steiner score. We always had top-rate composers, like Bernard Herrmann and Miklos Rózsa.

A VERY FINE LINE WAS DRAWN BY THE LINE BETWEEN WHAT MEDUSA'S MASTER OF THE MACHINERY BOOK REFERENCE YOU'RE SAID TO A DIFFERENT TYPE OF MACHINERY. YOU COULD SAY I THINK OF SOMETHING I THINK THAT'S POSSIBLE.

Too, well, Mike's book was written long before Tony and I started our books. He is a friend of ours who started collecting various stills from people and he interviewed me off and on twenty years ago.



MEDUSA

CLASH OF THE TITANS (1981)

KNOWN FOR: BEING A STONE-COLD SNAKE WOMAN, BLOOD THAT TURNS INTO SCORPIONS, HATING MIRRORS.



Continued on page 100

TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK, GO TO www.rayharryhausen.com.

Yes, I saw Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and *Corpse Bride*. But they're really puppet films; our films used the same technique, only we had characters that were believable in a real context, which is a different proposition than an obvious puppet film. Nowadays, it's mostly CGI, of course, the current movies don't use stop-motion. I get a lot of fan letters saying they prefer our technique to CGI, which is touted as the only possible way to make a film today. CGI may be a wonderful tool, but in my mind it's only a tool.

IN THE BOOK, IN YOUR OWN WORDS, YOU SAY YOU HAVE MANY PAGES OF UNREALIZED IDEAS. WHICH OF YOUR IDEAS HAVE YOU NOT MADE WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO SEE COMING TO LIFE?

Really, I'd like to do more Greek mythology. There are just so many different stories, like the labours of Hercules, for example, that could be brought to the screen with stop-motion.

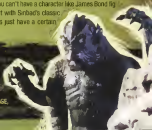
RECENTLY, ONE OF THE THINGS THAT'S BEEN IN HOLLYWOOD, DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT GOING BACK TO THE OLD SCHOOL OF ANIMATION?

Well, they could try it, but you have to remember that we resuscitated these stories in a certain way, for a certain purpose. You can't have a character like James Bond fighting a skeleton, which is why we went with Sinbad's classic. Sinbad's classic takes in the first place. These stories just have a certain magic to them.

THE KRAKEN

CLASH OF THE TITANS

KNOWN FOR: GOING POSSESSOR'S DIRTY WORK, MENACING TOGA GIRLS IN BONDAGE, GUTTING SQUIDS WITH MEDUSA.



✠
TOMMY WIRKOLA
SPRAYS BLOOD
ALL OVER THE
NORWEGIAN FILM
INDUSTRY WITH HIS
SPLATTER COMEDY

Dead Snow.



THE Rotten Reich

by SEAN PLUMMER

NORWAY IS BETTER KNOWN AS A LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN THAN A LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT MOVIE, BUT ITS younger filmmakers are working to change that. The last decade has seen genre films such as *Wilhelm* (2003) and *Rovdyr* (2008) play international film festivals, while the 2006 slasher *Fritt vil* spawned a sequel last year and was recently released to DVD in North America under the name *Cold Prey*.

Add to that growing list of horrific Norwegian exports *Dead Snow*, or *Dead Snow* as it will be called when IFC puts it in limited North American release June 19. Set in the rugged forests and snow-covered mountains of Norway's far north, the film takes seven medical students, cuts them off from civilization (and cell phone coverage) and pits them against a squad of resurrected Nazi soldiers determined to reclaim the gold they plundered from locals during World War II, before being run into the mountains and left to die.

"When I came up with this idea a lot of years ago, I just figured, 'What's more evil than a zombie? A Nazi zombie!'" says 29-year-old director Tommy Wirkola of the story's origins. "It's a way to make a campy, fun film and at the same time play with the themes and stuff that is known in Norway."

Dead Snow is a straight-up zombie splatterfest which clearly acknowledges its debt to Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* films, George A. Romero's zombie legacy and Peter Jackson's *Dead Alive* in its devilish sense of humour and outrageous kills. And while the idea of Nazi zombies is not original (see p.30 for an overview of this strange subgenre), *Dead Snow* distinguishes itself both by being a good Nazi zombie film and for striking the balance between suspense and goofy gore.





WHAT'S
MORE
EVIL
THAN A
ZOMBIE?
A NAZI
ZOMBIE! ■■

Tommy Wirkola

Wirkola explains, "What we wanted to do is go back to that '80s feeling where you could show lots of blood, guts, decapitations, and all that stuff, but when the audience walks out, they walk out with a smile."

This is not to say that *Dead Snow* doesn't have its fair share of scares; for example, the stabbing death of a camper early in the film is especially jolting due to the fact that it's shot from a distance and without musical accompaniment. Wirkola and his writing partner, Stig Frode Henriksen, were very conscious of making sure the splatstick didn't turn into slapstick.

"The humor and the horror was a thing we discussed a lot, trying not to go too far in either direction, especially in the humor," Wirkola acknowledges. "Because once you tip over too much, it becomes a parody, and we didn't want to do that. We added a few jokes here or there, removed a couple of them during the shoot. We thought a lot about keeping that balance."

The seriousness of the students' situation is established early on in an eerie monologue delivered by a stranger (played by veteran Norwegian actor Bjørn Sundquist) who relays the area's bloody history to the skeptical youth. The resurrected Nazis, it turns out, were members of the Einsatz, a real WWII paramilitary force which terrorized Norway during the German occupation. Their sole purpose, as stated by top Nazi Adolph Eichmann during his eventual trial in Israel, was to "murder Jews and deprive them of their property."

"The north of Norway, compared to the south of Norway, got it really hard because when the Russians started working their way into [the country] they came in through the north, and the Germans knew that," says Wirkola, whose grandfather fought in the war. "They burned down every single house and

building; they left nothing for the Russians to hide in, to get warm in during the winter. So except for a couple of churches, we haven't got a single building that's older

than 50 years, and all the people in the north of Norway were moved south. So in the north especially, there are a lot of history, stories, strong feelings about it."

Fittingly, Wirkola's Nazis are evil bastards as adept at killing their enemies now that they're dead as when they were alive. Message board-burking zombie purists may balk at the fact that *Dead Snow*'s undead don't shamble, they run. Fast. Nor are they as interested in feasting on human flesh as recovering their stolen gold. Wirkola, a long-time horror fan with great respect for the Romero tradition of slow zombies, stands by his choices.

"There are two good reasons why we needed them to run," he says. "The one is, well, the chase sequences happen in snow. So, if you run in the deep snow, it will be really scary if the zombies walk. And second, these are Nazi zombies. These are fast, organized units. The Nazis should be fast. We talked a lot about the zombie rules and them being after the gold, not flesh and gore. It's half zombie, half a good old-fashioned curse film/pirate story almost. So we wanted to mix those two. But Nazi zombies should be a little different than an ordinary zombie."

Bringing the director's feckless fascists to life, so to speak, were effects artists Per Steinar Høftun, Shino Kotani and Steinar Kvarstein. (Høftun and Kotani are best known internationally for contributing to 2008's *Dark Floors*, the monster movie starring Finnish horror rock band Lordi.)

"They had been waiting to do this kind of project for a long time," says Wirkola, "and until now, in Norway and Scandinavia, they had only been doing small stuff. When we offered them this, they took it and just went for it."

Dead Snow is chock full of graphic mutilations, decapitations, disembowelments, amputations and throat-slittings – although the students give as good as they get. There's indeed more than a touch of the *Evil Dead* series here, and not just in the splatter-comedy tone, but also the abundance of characters that seem to keep on fighting dead things long after regular horror heroes would have either given up or bled out. One character, for example, falls into a cave, goes toe-to-toe with a zombie, saves himself from plunging off a cliff by climbing up a dead Nazi's intestines, gets bitten on the neck, stitches it up with a fishhook and covers it with duct tape – then promptly mounts a machine gun to his snowmobile and continues the fight. Wirkola sees his characters' no-nonsense, never-surrender approach to such an absurd situation as a reflection of Norwegian toughness, which is partly instilled by the country's harsh weather and partly the result of mandatory military training for all Norwegian men between eighteen and 44.

"We wanted to keep a little bit of the spirit of the north of Norway because we have a lot of hard nature in the north compared to the south, a lot like Canada – so hard people and hard nature," says Wirkola. "And we didn't want these people to be easy kills. We wanted them to fight for their lives. Really fight. All young boys have to go to the army. Norwegians take pride in taking care of themselves outdoors and when they're injured, and [they] don't need help unless it's really, really, really necessary."

This conflict between man and nature is integral to *Dead Snow*. Even though they are equipped with a new snowmobile, navigation equipment and the like, our protagonists' attempts at escape are stymied at every turn by the cold, the snow, avalanches and the unrelenting sameness of the terrain. It's almost as if the land doesn't want them to live.

"We wanted nature to almost be a villain itself, another obstacle for them to survive," elaborates Wirkola. "Everything is much worse when you have to escape a zombie and you have to do it in two metres of snow! We just wanted them to be out in the mountains where me and my writing partner have been a lot. We knew how it was and how it looked. We just wanted to give it that edge."

As a boy, Wirkola spent several winters and summers with his grandparents in Alta, a small town in the far north of Norway. When he started studying film, his mind took him back to the rugged landscapes and cold vistas of his youth. *Dead Snow* would be filmed an hour outside of Alta, in Langfjorden.

"In my older years, when I started studying movies, I always thought that would be an excellent place to shoot a movie," he says. "Most of the films are made in the south of Norway, but me and my guys

Colonel Herzog and his troops, and (above) Martin (Vegar Hoel) and Roy (Silly Frode Henningsen) prepare to fight the hordes.



always said, 'Why do you need to go to the south when you have mountains and forests and beaches and sea and all this beautiful stuff in the north?' So that's one of our goals, to keep shooting movies up there."

As he and other young Norwegian filmmakers continue to churn out well-received but modestly budgeted genre films (*Dead Snow* was made for just \$1.8 million USD), Wirkola sees the days of Norway's more serious cinema fading in favour of Hollywood-style fare.

"Fifteen years ago, there were almost no genre films in Norway," he says. "No matter what genre you had, there was almost always the 'drama' word in it. Really serious films. But the young audiences in Norway didn't go to them. So in the last ten years, Hollywood influences – comedies and especially horror films – are starting to pop up, and young people are going to the movies more than ever before. It's amazing to me that Norway has been so slow in making these types of films. It's starting to come around here and more of course, but there hasn't been much until the last ten years."

The success of *Frittvill* and other Norwegian horror flicks has emboldened Wirkola and his generation, despite the doubts of the country's filmmaking establishment.

"A lot of people thought we were gambling when we made a zombie film in Norway because they thought young people in Norway wouldn't go see it," he says. "They were wrong, and it was a big hit [since opening there in January, it has sold some 140,000 tickets – a lot for a nation of 4.8 million]. I'm not embarrassed to say that I love Hollywood and a lot of its films. I'm much influenced by American film."

Considering that *Dead Snow* is so accessible, it's no surprise that Wirkola has set his sights on Hollywood. ("Yeah, that's always been one of my goals.") First, though, is a sequel to his well-received Norwegian Kill Bill parody *Kill Bujto: The Movie* (2007). Following that will be a TV show called *Hedfjord*, which Wirkola describes as "kind of a mix between *Hot Fuzz* and *Two Peaks*." Then, fingers crossed, there will be his US debut, *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters*, which will pick up fifteen years after the whole gingerbread house incident and see the siblings becoming bounty hunters. The project would be for Will Ferrell and Adam McKay's Gary Sanchez Productions. ("It's looking good, but it's kind of hard to tell right now," Wirkola notes.)

As to Norway's budding reputation as a source of unique horror, like France and Japan and Spain before it, Wirkola is hopeful for its future, although he points out that virtually no genre films were made there between 1950's acclaimed (non-zombie film) *Lake of the Dead* and the current wave. But give them some time.

"So, you had two horror films in 40 years," he jokes. "We're getting there now, but it's a slow ride." 🍷

✠
**EVERYTHING
 IS MUCH WORSE
 WHEN YOU HAVE
 to ESCAPE A
 ZOMBIE
 AND YOU HAVE
 TO DO IT IN
 TWO METRES
 of SNOW!**

Tommy Wirkola.



✠
RICHARD RAAPHORST, DIRECTOR
BEHIND THE STILLBORN FEATURE
WORST CASE SCENARIO, DISCUSSES HIS
SALVAGE PROJECT *Army of Frankenstein*.
✠

THE BEST NAZI ZOMBIE MOVIE *Never Made* by JOVANKA VUCKOVIC

HOW COULD ANYONE POSSIBLY FORGET THE PROMOTIONAL TRAILERS FOR WORST CASE SCENARIO?

The Dutch trailers appeared on the internet back in 2004 (at geronhoundinc.com) to great excitement from the horror community. The first one featured a spectacular reveal of a hideously mutilated, Frankenstein-like army of undead Nazi soldiers crawling out from the sea onto German shores. The second, which plays out like a short film, sees two children digging for worms when maggots rain down upon them from a sky filled with rotting abominations descending via stylized hot air balloons. Beautifully shot and full of original imagery, they were trailers for the best Nazi zombie movie never made.

"It was a combination of two ideas I had developed with my creative partner Bart Oosterhoum," director Richard Raaphorst says of their inspiration. "The idea of a German island and zombies were already part of the plan and we both agreed that we would not use the Nazi stuff because we thought it was tasteless. But after a

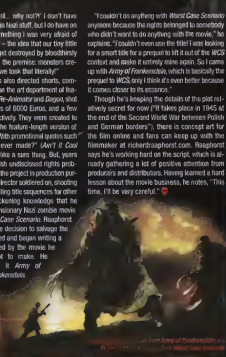
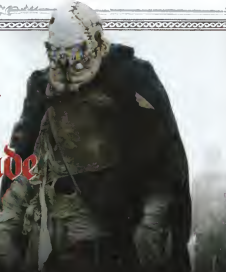
few days we said, 'Well... why not?' I don't have any particular interest in Nazi stuff, but I do have an interest in war. It's something I was very afraid of as a kid—and still am—the idea that our tiny little safe family life could get destroyed by bloodthirsty troops. Here we found the premise: monsters creating monsters—and we took that literally!"

Raaphorst, who has also directed shorts, commercials, and worked in the art department of features such as *Beyond Re-Animator* and *Dagon*, shot the trailers on budgets of 6000 Euros, and a few hundred Euros, respectively. They were created to generate funding for the feature-length version of *Worst Case Scenario*. With promotional quotes such as "The best movie ever made?" (*Am't it Cool News*), *WCS* seemed like a sure thing. But, years passed and nightmarish undisclosed rights problems surfaced that left the project in production purgatory. The would-be director soldiered on, shooting music videos and creating title sequences for other features, with the sickening knowledge that he would never film his visionary Nazi zombie movie under the title *Worst Case Scenario*. Raaphorst eventually came to the decision to salvage the concepts he developed and began writing a prequel inspired by the movie he


never got to make. He called it *Army of Frankenstein*.

"I couldn't do anything with *Worst Case Scenario* anymore because the rights belonged to somebody who didn't want to do anything with the movie," he explains. "I couldn't even use the title I was looking for a smart title for a prequel to lift it out of the *WCS* context and make it entirely mine again. So I came up with *Army of Frankenstein*, which is basically the prequel to *WCS* only I think it's even better because it comes closer to its essence."

Though he's keeping the details of the plot relatively secret for now ("I'll take place in 1945 at the end of the Second World War between Polish and German borders"), there is concept art for the film online and fans can keep up with the filmmaker at richardraaphorst.com. Raaphorst says he's working hard on the script, which is already gathering a lot of positive attention from producers and distributors. Having learned a hard lesson about the movie business, he notes, "This time, I'll be very careful."



Left: *Army of Frankenstein* is a prequel to *Worst Case Scenario*.



IS DEAD SNOW PART OF ANOTHER INVASION OF NAZI ZOMBIE FILMS?
RUE MORGUE LOOKS AT THE EVOLUTION OF ONE OF HORROR
CINEMA'S MOST BIZARRE BASTARD CHILDREN.

Blitzkrieg Rot

by JOHN W. BOWEN

FEW HORROR FANS WOULD DISPUTE THAT OURS IS A
GENRE LITTERED WITH SUBGENRES AND SUB-SUBGENRES
THAT RANGE FROM THE SUBLIME TO THE RIDICULOUS.

Vampires have spawned lesbian vampires while slasher films have deteriorated into postmodern slasher parodies. The ghost story—horror's most diverse and revered incarnation—has been hijacked by the Japanese (with a little help from the Koreans) and compulsively stylized into the soggy, disjointed cliché we now know as J-horror. But long before Dan O'Bannon detonated the zombie comedy craze with *Return of the Living Dead* in 1985, a breakaway faction of the walking dead took a sharp right turn into one of the most brutal chapters in recent human history, and the Nazi zombie film was born. While the notion is still routinely met with a resounding "WTF?!" from the uninitiated, the fleeting popularity of this bizarre cinematic bastard child actually makes perfect sense from a historical standpoint.

During wartime, it's natural that we take some measure of comfort in viewing enemy forces as mindless, brutish automatons, and this mindset was especially prevalent among the allied nations throughout World War II. Given the Nazis' spectacular record of atrocities and their mindless devotion to extremist doctrine, it was particularly convenient (and important) to believe that these acts were carried out by monsters rather than once-rational human beings.

However, the roots of the Nazi zombie film can also be found in mainstream cinema of the postwar era. In the collective psyche of hundreds of millions, the war against Hitler was still a relatively fresh memory in the early 1970s. It was natural that the production of WWII-themed films spiked during the postwar '40s and the paranoid, militaristic '50s, but their continued popularity in

America throughout the Vietnam War era had additional significance. Embroiled in an unjust, largely unnecessary and indisputably unpopular war that fiercely divided their nation, Americans took some much-needed solace in cinema that recalled a very recent time when they valiantly (if belatedly) joined the allies to fight a war whose absolute necessity couldn't be reasonably disputed by even the most ardent pacifist. Unsurprisingly, films about the Vietnam War itself were a hard sell during the conflict and hence few were made before the late '70s, when Americans were finally reaching a consensus that the whole thing had been a mistake.

Is it incongruous, then, that the earliest (and likely the best-loved) Nazi zombie film appeared just one year before *The Deer Hunter*, *Go Tell the Spartans* and *Crossing Home*, and two years before *Apocalypse Now*? It's difficult to say for certain, but there can be no disputing that the tagline for the 1977 drive-in neo-classic *Shock Waves*—"Once they were almost human!"—neatly sums up our age-old compulsion to dehumanize our enemies, be they Turkish hordes, Stormtroopers, Viet Cong or Taliban. Inarguably the one that started it all, *Shock Waves* sees shipwrecked tourists stranded on a Caribbean island crawling with members of the *Leibniz*, a Nazi expedition (gone awry, naturally) that created mute, undead, amphibious super-soldiers. While all latter-day zombie films owe debts of varying size to *Night of the Living Dead*, it's worth



noting that George A. Romero's stumbling, grunting corpses have been replaced here by a seemingly unstoppable elite fighting force that can live underwater as easily as on land. Although there's some merit to critical charges that *Shock Waves* simply isn't as frightening, gory or stylish as it could have been, it's still lots of fun with an audacious premise and a fine cast, including Brooke Adams (Philip Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*) and horror icons Peter Cushing and John Carradine.

Sadly, the earliest cinematic offspring of *Shock Waves* are an inauspicious bunch. *Death Ship* (1993), directed by Canadian TV veteran Alvin Rakoff and co-scripted by Jack Hill (*Spider Baby*, *Foxy Brown*) continues the shipwreck-survivors-attacked-by-Nazi-looters motif, but the zombies have been ditched in favour of ghosts, and hence the film scarcely warrants discussion here.

Eurotrash bombs *Zombie Lake* and *Oasis of the Zombies* (both from 1981) have even less to recommend them, but they do have Nazi zombies – underwater Nazi zombies, in fact, although any further comparisons to *Shock Waves* come to a screeching halt immediately thereafter. That original director Jess Franco was fired from *Zombie Lake* speaks several volumes, and that he was replaced by Jean Rollin speaks about a dozen more. In case both those names aren't a (waking) dead giveaway, it's safe to say that *Zombie Lake* has little going for it beyond nudity, but if that's your thing, well, there's plenty to go around. Apparently a local *Zombie Lake* bylaw makes skinny dipping compulsory for all women within a five-mile radius; unfortunately, all (including a girls' volleyball team!) are destined to be munches on by waterlogged undead SS types who've been lurking beneath the surface ever since angry locals fought back and tossed their corpses into the lake decades earlier. Tempro-paint-and-oatmeal zombie makeup further hobbles this nonsensical mess – strictly for insatiable schlock hounds and cine-madochists.

It's hard not to view *Oasis of the Zombies* (a.k.a. *Bloodsucking Nazi Zombies*) as a companion piece to *Zombie Lake*, given that it was written and directed by Franco and is just about as awful on every level. (Although in fairness, the zombie makeup is a considerable improvement.) After a flashback sequence in which Nazis transporting plundered treasure across the Sahara are ambushed and massacred by British troops, we jump



Die Totenkörper: from Shock Waves, co-starring Anthony Quinn and Zombie Lake.

ahead several decades as various would-be fortune hunters venture into the desert in search of the lost booty, only to run afoul of the undead *Afrakörps*.

Also released in 1981, *Night of the Zombies* saw Joel M. Reed (*Bloodsucking Freaks*) try non-scientist to cast New York state as the Bavarian mountains (no, really...), where undead Nazis attack CIA men investigating a top secret WWII chemical called Gamma 693. Nearly gore-free and completely amateur, it remains an obscurity.

Perhaps because these post-*Shock Waves* efforts fell so terribly flat, Nazi zombies largely disappeared from the radar for the next couple of decades (the purportedly inept, way obscure French curio *Drew's Story* from 1985 being an exception). But when they began reappearing sporadically after the turn of the millennium, the results – while not uniformly brilliant by any means – were generally more watchable. Of particular note is the British 2001 effort *The Bunker*, another example of a film that failed to find an audience in the post-9/11 zeitgeist. This deeply creepy psychological horror film, set on the Belgian/German border during the last days of World War II, chron-

icles the deterioration of a small, disparate group of German soldiers taking refuge in an underground stronghold while enemy forces advance. Many will find the pace slow, but it's highly recommended for fans of *The Stanning* and *Session 9* and, like Michael Mann's admittedly zombie-free *The Keep* (1983), deserves additional props for making considerable efforts to differentiate between Nazis and regular German soldiers.

The 2006 releases *Horrors of War* and *SS Doornotrooper* both echo *Shock Waves*' premise of Nazi experiments in human engineering to create a better soldier, and both have met with very mixed responses due largely to lacklustre special effects. *Outpost* (2006) has fared somewhat better, particularly with fans of *Predator*-style action/horror hybrids, but with its superpower-endowed zombies it's clearly not for all tastes.

With festival favourite *Dead Snow* set for release this month and more in the pipeline on the horizon (including the German film *Cold Storage*, *Stone's War* by Finnish director Marko Mäkelä, *The 4th Reich* and *Army of Frankenstein* – see p.29), the Nazi zombie film appears very much alive for the time being. ☠





TWENTY YEARS AFTER THE LAST *GHOSTBUSTERS* FILM, THE ORIGINAL CAST REASSEMBLES FOR A VIDEO GAME THAT INVITES YOU TO STRAP ON A PROTON PACK AND BATTLE SOME FAMILIAR DENIZENS OF THE UNDERWORLD.

RETURN TO SPOOK CENTRAL

BY MONICA S. KUEBLER

IF YOU'VE EVER DREAMED OF BUSTING SOME TROUBLE-MAKIN' GHOSTS, YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO MARK JUNE 16 ON YOUR CALENDAR, BECAUSE PETER, RAY,

Egon and Winston are back in *Ghostbusters: The Video Game* and you need to help them save New York from the latest eruption of ectoplasmic evil.

"It's a pretty simple idea in all mythology that there is a destructive force that wants to be unleashed in the world, and we [are] just the guys to

stop it," says Harold Ramis, who co-wrote the original film (out this month on Blu-Ray) and starred as Egon Spengler in both *Ghostbusters* features. Serving as a consultant/writer on *Ghostbusters: The Video Game*, he also joins most of the original cast in voicing their characters for the title.



WE ALWAYS APPROACHED IT AS JUST MAKING THE THIRD FILM.

TERMINAL REALITY CREATIVE DIRECTOR **DREW HAWORTH**

The two Ghostbusters feature films, released in 1984 and 1989, were blockbusters (part one was the second highest grossing film of '84, in fact), which resulted in stars Ramis, Dan Aykroyd (as Raymond Stantz), Bill Murray (as Peter Venkman), and Ernie Hudson (as Winston Zeddemore) appearing on posters, lunchboxes, even the cover of *Hollings Stone*. The success of the first film also spawned an animated series, titled *The Real Ghostbusters* (out this month on DVD), which premiered in 1986 and ran for seven seasons. If you grew up in the '80s, you probably loved the Ghostbusters. Perhaps that's why it's so disappointing that up until now there hasn't been a noteworthy video game to round out the franchise.

Though there have been several Ghostbusters games released over the years, they were typically hampered by graphic limitations (or just a lack of imagination). In fact, 1988's *Ghostbusters* for the NES is still regularly lambasted for being one of the worst video games of all time. If any genre properly rightfully deserves a do-over, it's this one.

The idea for the new Ghostbusters video game was hatched by the game's initial distributor, Sierra. (Later, after a corporate merger the game was picked up for distribution by Atari.) From there, it landed in the lap of developer Terminal Reality, which jumped at the opportunity to take on the project; he doubt inspired

by the fact that they also had the support of the film's cast.

"Dan had been wanting to get the [third] movie going for a long time and he sort of sidled over to the idea of doing a CG 'film' because it was so difficult to get everybody else on board in terms of scheduling," explains Terminal Reality creative director Drew Haworth. "So he was already sort of primed in that direction. When we came on board we looked at what kind of game we would want to make. We certainly did not want to revamp the [movies]. The canon doesn't allow for anything before the first one, so we thought, 'Well, why don't we just go ahead and make a third one? There's never going to be a third movie, as far as we know.' So we took it from there and that's how we formulated it. We always approached it as just making the third film." (Aykroyd has since announced that *Ghostbusters in Hell* is in development.)

Ghostbusters: The Video Game picks up after the events of the second feature and finds the Ghostbusters now enjoying status as beloved fixtures of New York. They are official paranormal investigation and eliminations experts under contract with the city, working



rectly with new mayor Jack Mulligan (voiced by Bill Murray's brother Brian Doyle-Murray). Ramis credits Aykroyd for coming up with idea of "ghost janitors," as well as the decision to have them work in New York City.

"Part of the brilliance of Dan's concept was setting it in New York, for one thing, because New Yorkers are so practical and down-to-earth and skeptical," he explains. "It is very hard to surprise a New Yorker. So that really played well into the ghost janitor concept. New York just seems like it represents America in a big way. If something big is going to happen, it should happen in New York."

As with all entries in the franchise, something bad is brewing in the city. Not only have New Yorkers become infatuated with the Ghostbusters themselves, they have also become fascinated with Gozer (the ancient Sumerian god the Ghostbusters faced in the first film) and all things Gozerian. As a result, the Natural History Museum is preparing a World of Gozer exhibit, set to open in two days.

"The names Zuel and Gozer are complete mumbo-jumbo, obviously," says Ramis of the characters' origins.

We Got Our! Players assume the role of a fifth Ghostbuster, whose job it is to test experimental equipment for NYC's official paranormal janitors.



I Ain't Afraid O' No Ghosts: The Stay Puft Marshmallow Man and Slimer join a variety of new ghosts in Ghostbusters: The Video Game.

"We needed some minions. ... We were just reaching back into some pre-Christian Sumerian lore that doesn't really exist but sounded credible."

The game kicks off just as something goes extremely wrong with the upcoming exhibit and an ancient evil is awakened. Turns out these events are also somehow mysteriously connected to an archaeologist named Dr. Alyssa Shepherd (voiced by Alyssa Milano), who finds herself smack dab in the centre of the supernatural goings-on. The Ghostbusters must rescue Shepherd and stop the escalating paranormal activity before it destroys the city, or worse, the world.

This is where you come in. Gamers take on the role of a new recruit – a fifth Ghostbuster, if you will – hired the day the game begins. Your title: Experimental Equipment Technician. Your role: Field test all the new Ghostbusters technology before Venkman, Spengler, Stantz and Zeddemore actually use it.

"The mantra that we followed over and over again – we emphasized this to everybody on the team a lot – was that the game needs to be fun, funny or scary at every instance," says Haworth. "We are balancing the humour with some pretty big scares, some big tension, some 'hold and release,' some jump-outs, some slow-burning potboiler stuff, and then mixing that with the tension release of being really funny."

Of course, what makes this release even more notable is the fact that *Ghostbusters: The Video Game* also reunites the entire cast of the original film for the game's voice work, with the exception of Sigourney Weaver (Venkman's love interest Dana Barrett) and Rick Moranis (Dan's bumbling neighbour Louis Tully), who both passed on the project. In addition, Aykroyd, Ramis and Murray all provided feedback and varying degrees of input during the game's development process.

"They consulted with us every step of the way," Ramis confirms. "First on concept, then on locations, then they would show us animations of how the game would be played and what the game would look like, then finally, scripts. We had an opportunity to contribute to the script. I know Dan contributed considerable jargon and tools and technologies. I just worked on my own dialogue and I know Bill worked on his."

Haworth elaborates: "Sometimes [they had] more feedback than you really wanted to hear, but every time they came back with something – 'It's not the way Egon would say this,' 'You know, Venkman would never put himself in this situation.' – it just made it more and more *Ghostbusters*."

For Ramis, who limits his video-gaming to casino-style games, the development experience was a new one.

"What shocked me was that the script was 250 pages long," he says, "more than double the length of a feature script, because you need dialogue to cover so many alternative choices that the player might make. Generally there are a lot of explosives and exclamations because you are dealing with surprises all the time. ... And because Egon is supposed to be the smart one, they loaded me up with some incredible exposition, very difficult to say quickly, but I tried."

It's not only the heroes, and the actors voicing them, that will be familiar to fans of the franchise, as some of the villains – including Stay Puft and Vigo the Carpathian – are back as well. (And in a game which Haworth says has "more slime than blood," rest assured, Slimer is back too.) The firehouse appears just as fans remember it from the movies. And certain missions will see gamers travelling back to the public library (for another encounter with the Grey Lady, which they never did manage to catch), as well as Times Square, Central Park and, of course, the Museum of Natural History, where all hell breaks loose.

"It really gets around and there [are some] big environments," notes Ramis. "It would be hard to make a movie on this scale."

But *Ghostbusters: The Video Game* isn't all just a trip down memory lane. New spectral and corporeal enemies await as well, including a Golemtych, which can create a body for itself out of physical objects around it. This means that the game environments are both interactive and destructible, and that there are lots of things to blast, blow up and generally annihilate throughout the course of the game. To aid in this, developers have souped up the Ghostbusters' main weapon, the Proton Stream, and imbued it with a few new characteristics.

"[It] allows you to not only capture ghosts, which you can do already, but also slam ghosts [around] and break objects and interact with the environment that way," explains Haworth. "We've also added what we call a Photon Dart, which is a supercharged per-

IT WOULD BE HARD TO MAKE A MOVIE ON THIS SCALE.

HAROLD RAMIS



side emitter that travels down the beam and causes an area-of-effect attack. Another new thing [is that] players will be able to capture or pick up almost any object in the environment that is under a certain weight class and maneuver it through the set with the proton stream. Kind of our whole thrust, as you've been hearing over and over again, [is that] we took the original and updated it."

Other familiar weaponry will include the Dark Matter Stripper and Slime Blower from the second film. However, the Slime Blower is now enhanced to also shoot a slime tether that can attach various objects to each other in order to allow players to manipulate heavier, otherwise immovable, obstacles in the game's environment, helping to facilitate the puzzle-solving element of the adventure.

"Ghostbusters are not exactly the most athletic guys in the world," says Haworth, laughing. "We wanted to stay true to that, so there are not a lot of hand springs and back flips in our game. They can barely climb over anything actually, so we need a lot of the physical interaction from the environment—our guide to allow you to

manipulate puzzles and solve things in the world itself."

And, of course, it wouldn't truly be an authentic Ghostbusters experience without familiar items such as PKE meters (to trace the spectral trails of slime) and Proton Pack backpacks, which, of course, fire the aforementioned Proton Streams.

"I think you'll find the Proton Pack is something that people, especially true fans, really, really focus on," says Haworth. "There are a lot of people who make their own Proton Packs and their own equipment and those are the sorts of things that we needed to pay a lot of attention to. So the Proton Pack, although it becomes updated throughout the game as Egon develops new technology, is as accurate as you can probably imagine. Same goes for the [Ghostbusters' vehicle] Ecto-1 and the PKE Meter, which is also updated. It now carries onboard an online Tobin's Spirit Guide, as well as the Ghostbusters' field manual."

An equal amount of care and attention went into the look of the game. The developers studied what director Ivan Reitman had done

with the films, both with (over) tones and hues, and with the special effects; then they added a series of super-saturated particle and glow effects to update the look of spook-fighting and bring into play some of the technological advancements of the last 25 years. The scares and tension of the game also played a key role in its visual design. In addition to manipulating light and adding other surface effects, the development team took the concept one step deeper, into the environments' base design.

"When we built environments, we would push perspective," Haworth explains. "We looked at a lot of old films and we actually went in sort of a very subtle Dr. Caligari way, in that we pushed perspective here and there to make you feel vaguely ill at ease. It's just enough to sort of tense [up] the whole experience."

The game, which will be available for most major platforms, including Xbox 360, PS3, PS2, Wii, PC and DS, boasts both a linear single-player narrative and an online multi-player component in which gamers can play as any of the Ghostbusters and answer emergency calls (of six different job types) in twelve different areas of the city. Gamers should note that the Wii, PS2 and DS releases (developed by Red Fly Studio) will be substantially different from the other versions visually; they boast a much more stylized Pixar-like approach to the animation and will be toned-down content-wise for younger audiences.

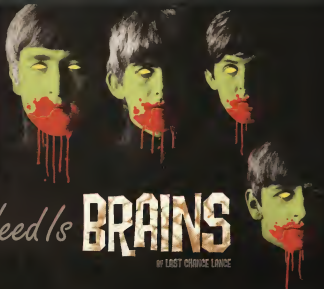
Regardless of which version you get your hands on, Haworth proclaims, "There's a lot of fire, there's a lot of explosions, there's a lot of destruction."

So grab your gear. It's ghostbusting time again, and it's gonna get messy. ☹

Don't Cross The Streams: The new multi-function Proton Streams allows players to do more than just capture ghosts.



WITH EVERYTHING FROM
SUPERHEROES TO CLASSIC
LITERATURE GETTING
THE UNDEAD TREATMENT
THESE DAYS, IT WAS
ONLY A MATTER OF TIME
BEFORE THE INVASION OF
The ZOMBEATLES.



All You Need Is BRAINS

BY LAST CHANCE LANCE

EVER WONDERED WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO celebrities when the zombie Armageddon finally arrives? Will infected actors, singers and songwriters drop their scripts, microphones and guitars and pick up severed limbs and strings of intestines, or will they continue to wail songs and release music videos in between munching on hapless victims?

A new film set in a parallel world where zombies have taken over and developed their own cultural scene answers some of those questions as it examines the rise and fall of the most infamous band to rock the undead world:



The Zombeats. Titled *The Zombeats: All You Need Is Brains*, it was written and directed by Canadian-born radio producer Doug Gordon and based on an undead Beatles tribute by a band called The Gamers from Madison, Wisconsin. Gordon discovered the group when its YouTube video for "A Hard Day's Night of the Living Dead" was picked by Rob Zombie for his 2007 list of favorite independent horror shorts. After meeting the band at a Halloween gig later that year, Gordon pitched the idea of doing the film.

"It's only a matter of time till we are all zombies and the zomnivore is upon us," he warns. "So why not get a headstart on the musical mirth and mayhem of The Fab Gore?"

The resulting 23-minute mockumentary is presented in a VH1 *Behind the Music* format, reminiscent of movies such as *This Is Spinal Tap* and former Monty Python frontman Eric Idle's satirical Beatles parody *The Rutles: All You Need Is Cash*.

Narrated by Gordon in the guise of Scottish zombie comedian Angus MacAbre, the film takes viewers back to the band's humble beginnings in the members' hometown of Pool of Liver, where founders Jaw Nannon and Pall Karkartrey first met and formed the band with Gorge Herryson, and Est Breast, who would later be replaced by deceased drummer Dingo Scarr. With songs "I Want to Eat Your Hand," "No Brains A Week" and "P.S. I Love Eating You," the band quickly clawed its way to the top of the zombie pop charts. (The Zombeats' eight-song debut album, *Meat The Zombeats!*, is newly available from Beethoven Records at beethoven.com/zombeats.html.)

"My theory is that zombies started by eating the stupid people first since they're the easiest to catch," Gordon explains. "Then, after the undead ran out of stupid people, they had to put more effort into hunting down the smart people. This Smart People Diet caused zombies to evolve in a Darwinian fashion. As the zombies absorbed smart people's brains, they evolved into intelligent, creative creatures with their own arts/entertainment/pop culture scene."

Anyone familiar with the history of The Beatles will find the Zombeats thoroughly enjoyable, with hilarious parallels, such as the fictional band's performances at the Cadaver Club and on *The Dead Sullivan Show*; and an examination of the controversy created when Nannon claimed that the

Zombeats had become more popular than Satan and the persistent rumours that Pall was not really dead.

But as with any film about a band—the emphasis must be placed on the music. In the mockumentary viewers are treated to four archival footage snippets of songs such as "Dead Prudence," "I'm Eating Through You," "She Dead" and "Hey Food," all while Dingo beats his skins with severed limbs and legions of undead fans are screaming for brainsaaaaa-aaaaaa!!!!

"Most people really enjoy it," says Gordon. "I think it helps if you're a zombie and a Beatles fan, but I think even if you're not, you will still enjoy it."

Although it's an ultra low-budget outing that suffers from crude makeup effects and miscellaneous dollar store body-part props, *All You Need Is Brains* still proves to be a highly entertaining film that'll have you moaning along with the lyrics. And if you find yourself unable to get enough of the fetid phenomena, The Zombeats are clawing their way out of the grave for a live show called *Zombiepalooza*.

"This postmodern vaudeville show will feature The Fab Gore performing their hits live and undead," says Gordon of the upcoming shows planned for Milwaukee and Chicago. (Dates are listed on the Beethoven website.)

"It will also feature a screening of the mockumentary and the undead comedy shynings of Angus MacAbre. People will be encouraged to come dressed as zombies and there will be interactive zombie prom and zombie fashion show elements." ☠





American HORRORS

ALL NEW DVD LINE UP OF PAIN!

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ONE OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL HORROR CREATORS IN THE WORLD, HART D. FISHER, THE GARBAGE MAN IS HORROR'S FIRST FEATURE FILM ABOUT A BLACK SERIAL KILLER. IF IT'S ONE THING MR. FISHER KNOWS ABOUT, IT'S SERIAL KILLERS AND SERIAL KILLER CULTURE. AS THE AUTHOR OF THE INFAMOUS JEFFREY DHAMMER COMICS MR. FISHER WAS A HOUNDED HORROR AUTHOR WHO'S WORK HAS BEEN BANNED, BURNED AND BLACK LISTED AROUND THE WORLD. THE GARBAGE MAN IS A BRUTAL, TORTURED FILM THAT TOOK 16 YEARS TO BE COMPLETED AFTER MR. FISHER'S FIRST LOVE AND LIVE IN GIRLFRIEND WAS MURDERED DURING FILMING.

AFTER NEARLY A DECADE OF FIGHTING TO KEEP HIS GIRLFRIEND'S MURDERER IN PRISON, MR. FISHER TURNED HIS ARTISTIC EYE TO FINISHING HIS LOST MASTERPIECE. THE GARBAGE MAN IS A SEARING JOURNEY THROUGH A SAVAGE MIND. BY DAY HE'S GOT BILLS TO PAY, A JOB HE DOESN'T LIKE AND TIME TO KILL. BUT THE VOICES IN HIS HEAD, VOICES BURNING HIM, HOUNDING HIM, HURTING HIM, SCREAMING AND TAUNTING HIM WITH WHAT THEY DID TO HIM AS A BOY... NEVER STOPPING UNTIL HE BREAKS, UNTIL HE DOES WHAT THEY WANT... UNTIL HE DOES CRUEL BLOODY THINGS...

STREET DATE: JUNE 30th, 2009

ABIGAIL THOUGHT SHE HAD IT ALL: A GOOD JOB, A HANDSOME FIANCE, BUT SHE JUST COULDN'T SHAKE HER DOUBTS ABOUT HER PERFECT MAN AND HIS WANDERING EYE. WHEN A CO-WORKER INVOLVES HER IN A SCHEME TO TEST HER FIANCE'S FIDELITY WITH THE NEW RECEPTIONIST AT WORK, ALICE, THINGS TAKE A GRUESOME TURN FOR THE WORSE.

SOON ABIGAIL FINDS OUT THAT ALICE IS PLAYING HER OWN GAME, A VERY PAINFUL GAME AND ABIGAIL NOW FINDS HERSELF IN A RACE AGAINST TIME TO UNDO HER MISTAKES BEFORE ALICE GETS WHAT SHE WANTS... FOR ALL ALICE EVER WANTED WAS TO BE LOVED...

STREET DATE: JULY 28th, 2009
FOR MORE ABOUT THESE FILMS AND OTHER FILMS GO TO:
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"WHEN THAT HORRIFIC END CAME, NOBODY LOVES ALICE LEFT ME BREATHLESS..."
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ALSO AVAILABLE FROM INDIE-PICTURES: ROUGH CUT



Would you kill to make a movie? The scary thing is, two independent filmmakers did.

In January 2003 a woman was found beaten, strangled, and stabbed in her Pennsylvania home. 8 months earlier, an independent horror film was shot on the nearby Appalachian Trail.

Rough Cut is a feature length documentary that explores the twisted true tale of two first-time filmmakers who had a dream of making a horror movie and the bizarre events that followed.

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Fear(s) of the Dark: Charles Burns' art comes to life in this French anthology

WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT

FEAR(S) OF THE DARK

Starring Gil Alma, Anne Akiko
and Guillaume Depardieu
Written and directed by Blutch, Charles Burns,
Pierre Di Scullo, et al
RPG Films

To competently film a phobia is not a simple task, as human fears are limitless and are difficult to visually convey. One of the benefits of animation is its ability to depict a wider range of terrors, no matter how detached from reality. Enter *Fear(s) of the Dark*, a collaborative effort from France featuring six animated works from different artists, each of whom were commissioned to provide an original segment revealing their own particular fears or nightmares.

The tales are as distinct in their visual styles as they are in their themes. Marie Caillou's segment, for example, is a Japanese ghost story about a schoolgirl, a dead samurai and a malicious doctor, that uses a lot of subtle grey tones with just a flash of the red stuff

from time to time, or there's Richard McGuire's story, which tells of a man who takes shelter from a snowstorm in an abandoned house, only to be petrified by ambiguous shapes that skiller past in the film's expressive shadows and looming darkness.

Charles Burns, creator of the award-winning graphic novel *Black Hole*, contributes the highlight of the anthology with a harsh tale about an introverted amateur entomologist who falls in love with a beautiful girl who slowly changes into a giant insect. Burns' signature high-contrast shading and cartoonish line work are unmistakable.

Also included is some abstract geometric imagery courtesy Pierre Di Scullo, as well as Lorenzo Mattotti's tale of disappearances in the woods, which has an organic hand-drawn look to it.

Fear(s) of the Dark also includes a wraparound story from French comic artist Blutch, who contributes a dialogue-free segment with a scratchy, pencil-on-paper look that features an evil old marquis who sics his attack dogs on passers-by.

Whatever your particular fear may be, there is sure to be something here that will get under your skin. Just keep telling yourself, it's only a cartoon... it's only a cartoon....

LAST CHANCE LANCE

SHORT-BUS CINEMA

SHUTTLE

Starring Peyton List, Cameron Goodman
and Tony Curran
Written and directed by Edward Anderson
Magnolia

The horror genre is known for encouraging audiences to talk to the screen. Sometimes we give advice, suggesting the protagonist not go down to the basement, but more often we scold them, calling out the characters for their stupidity in the face of very simple choices. (Should that girl run screaming from the house while dialing 911, or search for the source of the knife-sharpening noise?) It's kind of touching — we feel close to our genre, like it might actually hear us and take our advice. But no. The reason is obvious: If the characters acted like reasonable people, the movie would be over.



However, sometimes the foolhardiness gets so intense and so blatant that it compels us, as intelligent audience members, to scream at an inanimate object. "Shoot him!" we yell at the screen, knowing that we can change nothing. The stupid person will die, but at least it will be gory and fun to watch. Such is the lot of the horror fan.

This brings us to *Shuttle*. This film's premise, in which the driver of an airport shuttle bus picks up two women and two men in an attempt to kidnap the women for nefarious purposes, is so brittle that it requires all of its characters to behave with maximum stupidity just to keep from breaking before the 90-minute mark. You might think the antagonist would be vulnerable while driving a bus, considering his passengers want to escape or attack him. But they stay seated. Even when he lets one of them off for twenty minutes to go shopping (!?) she faithfully returns after just one feeble attempt to get help.

The female lead, Peyton List (best known as Jane, Don Draper's temporary secretary on *Mad Men*), gives as good a performance as possible under these conditions, but the script really gives her nowhere to go. By the time the big reveal happens in the last few minutes, you can count on two things: you won't care, and you'll be hoarse from all the frustrated yelling you've done.

JASON LAPEYRE

SEA SICKOS

DONKEY PUNCH

Starring Nicholas Barley, Robert Boulter and Sean Breckin
Directed by Oily Blackburn
Written by Oily Blackburn and David Bloom
Magnolia

According to the definition offered in the movie, a "donkey punch" is a sexual manoeuvre wherein a man engaged in the fine art of doggy-style rogering administers a blow to the back of his lady love's cranium immediately before unleashing his sexy time explosion. This causes her muscles to violently contract, which supposedly magnifies his orgasmic sensation exponentially. Of course, it's hard to imagine anyone would actually attempt this, let alone base an entire movie on it, but surprisingly, first-time director Oily Blackburn overcomes this, tasteless-sounding premise to deliver a beautifully crafted, tightly paced thriller full of invention and, most importantly, enough blood and gratuitous nudity to ensure an uncompromising NC-17 rating in the US.



Donkey Punch: A dumb life for a decent movie that Stuart liked a lot.

The games begin in *Donkey Punch* when a gaggle of gorgeous British gals on holiday in Spain meet some handsome sailors who take them on a luxury yacht for a bit of skinny dipping and pill popping. But when someone breaks out the "Russian ice" (meth), the girls transform into the sort of ravenous creatures plucked from a *Penthouse Forum* fever dream. And quicker than you can say "perestroika," they go below deck for a bit of the old in-out, in-out. This is where director Blackburn channels his inner perv, offering us unrestrained, prolonged glimpses of the lovely young *devchikas* slurping their way through every man in sight. But when one of the fellas is goaded into enacting the titular technique on the ravishing Lisa (Sean Breckin), it ends in disaster. Paranoia and tensions explode with a war of boys against girls and soon it's everyone for themselves, slicing and dicing their way through each other without mercy.

And thanks to a cracking cast of promising young British actors, the kids here are very believable, unlike the standard-variety irritating planktons that are the bread and butter of American horror films. Truthfully, a movie predicated on such an absurd sexual practice has no right to be this good! It's available on DVD in both rated and unrated versions, which begs the question: what sort of a chone would you have to be to get the R-rated release?

STUART F. ANDREWS

HORROR FOR SUCKERS

ATTACK OF THE GIANT LEECHES

Starring Mike Conway, Kerri Draper and Kevin Preese
Directed by Brett Kelly
Written by Jeff O'Brien
Midnight Releasing

One of Roger Corman's crummiest creature features gets another chance to feed in Ottawa indie filmmaker Brett Kelly's campy remake of

the 1959 film *Attack of the Giant Leeches*. It isn't a huge improvement, but Kelly's still done something exciting here; he's given a lighthearted, modern twist to a public domain turkey that will make you question why the current remake obsession seems limited to beloved genre classics.

The script hews fairly closely to the original *Leeches*, but cranks up the psychosexual tension a few notches. While investigating a rash of disappearances down at the local marsh, a determined park ranger (Mike Conway) butts heads with an embittered sheriff (Kevin Preese) who previously dated his demanding girlfriend (Kerri Draper). With the help of the gal's scientist father, they put aside their differences to dynamite the hell out of the leech-infested bog.

You would have to make a pretty dire move to not surpass the original *Leeches*, a boring affair directed by Bernard L. Kowalski under the penny-pinching guidance of producers Roger Corman and his brother Gene. Probably shot for just as cheap, Kelly's remake brings out the silliness of his subject with broad characterizations, just-because bikini babes and moonshine-sodden comic relief. While it doesn't quite recapture Kowalski's sweaty Everglades gothic, fans of the original—assuming one or two do exist—will surely enjoy Kelly's respectful scene recreations, such as the jilted husband sending his wife and her lover to the leeches' domain at gunpoint.

It's too bad, though, that the mutant blood-suckers don't get the frenzied plasma buffet they deserve. Kelly surpasses the embarrassing rubber suction cup-covered suits of the original



OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE THAT'S ONE ON

SCHOOL SPIRIT

DORM

Tarantasia Extreme

Though the Thai film industry has been around since the 1920s, only in the last decade has it really embraced horror, with supernatural titles such as *Shutter*, *Art of the Devil* and *Three* (Spirits, black magic and possession are popular storylines in the predominantly Buddhist country). *Dorm* features a boy who gets sent away to boarding school, where he finds himself haunted by the ghost of a kid who died there years earlier. This is a dark and creepy coming-of-age movie with a young cast that handles its solemn tone extremely well, helping to elevate it above what might have been just another run-of-the-mill ghost story. The fact that the spook is a short-haired boy rather than a long-haired girl is a welcome change too.

BODY COUNT: 2

PEOPLE ATTACKED ON THE TOILET: 2

HEALTH CARE

SICK NURSES

Magnolia

Based on the Thai superstition that a person's ghost will return seven days after death, this is a slick, twisted story about a doctor and his staff of seven sexy nurses who supplement their incomes by supplying cadavers to black-market organ traders. But when one nurse threatens to tell the authorities, the others kill her. Seven days later, her ghost returns, seeking revenge by preying upon her former co-workers' obsessions with body image and materialism. Each death is more clever and bizarre than the last, including one in which a victim's head is sewn into a designer handbag, and another where a woman is forced to literally eat herself to death. The amount of severed limbs and gory decapitations is simply astonishing, and proves to be just what the doctor ordered.

BODY COUNT: 11

PEOPLE ATTACKED ON THE TOILET: 1

APARTMENT HUNTING

SARS WARS: BANGKOK ZOMBIE CRISIS

Discotek Media

Sars Wars marks Thailand's premiere entry into the world of zombie films, and is such a dense blend of over-the-top action, lowbrow humour and blood-spurting horror that it almost defies categorization. In downtown Bangkok a disparate gang of kidnappers and martial arts experts are trapped in an apartment complex that has been quarantined due to a "SARS" outbreak that turns people into bloodthirsty deadies. Propelled by a high-energy techno score and peppered with *Kill Bill*-style animated cut scenes, it's basically a zom-com in the vein of *The Evil Dead* that successfully combines a gigantic zombie python, wisecracking heroes armed with battery-operated lightsabres and a stomach-bursting undead baby that sails through the air *Matrix*-style. As the trailer warns: bring toilet paper because you'll shit yourself laughing!

BODY COUNT: 70

PEOPLE ATTACKED ON THE TOILET: 3

by keeping it old-school simple — here the leeches are hand puppets that creep in from the edges of the frame to drain the blood out of their victims. But too often they are forced to tread water while the ranger and sheriff trade jealous verbal barbs.

No one will confuse the new *Attack of the Giant Leeches* with a good film, but it's certainly no worse than the Sci-Fi channel's original movies, which have bled the fun out of the creature feature market for far too long.

PAUL CORIPE

THE POLANSKI OF PANTIES AND PENTAGRAMS

SUCCUBUS: THE DEMON

Starring Markus Sala, Pekka Oksanen and Maarit From

Written and directed by Sami Haavisto
Redemption

With the success of Sweden's *Let the Right One In* and Norway's *Dead Snow*, one could easily believe that Scandinavian horror films can do no wrong. That theory is challenged with the Finnish-made *Succubus: The Demon*.

Crushed over his wife's unexplained suicide, Henri spends the first act of the film wandering aimlessly through his renaissance fair-inspired apartment — in his underwear, no less — and whining to his co-workers about his dearly departed. When his wife visits him in a series of feverish dreams, Henri realizes that mysterious circumstances led to her death and he becomes obsessed with conjuring her spirit. So he draws a pentagram, sacrifices a cat and unlocks the Gates of Hell, bringing forth a scantily clad succubus for one of the least-f titillating orgy scenes ever captured on digital video.

If you still have any self-respect after the film is over, here's an easy way to rid yourself of it: watch any of the making-of featurettes that *Redemption* was kind enough to include. Curious to know how those awful CGI effects were created? You're covered. If you weren't turned off enough by that slime-and-oatmeal-caked orgy scene, check out *Erotic Nightmares*, in which one of the participants — apparently a well-known Finnish porn actress — dishes on how different it is to work on a horror film. The most bizarre extra, though, is "Premier Night," seven minutes of the film's opening night in a Helsinki cinema, where the director shows off an air of self-importance while rushing in onlookers to fill the empty seats.

The box cover compares Sami Haavisto to Roman Polanski. One is a master of suspense, capable of capturing his character's foreboding dread and anxiety, the other throws together some monster makeup, fake blood, CGI skulls, software sex and an uninteresting story to conjure up a whole lot of lame.

ERIC VEILLETTE



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TERRORS

REVIEWS BY STUART F. ANDREWS



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10 mins

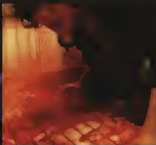
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Rumour has it that our review of the short *Criticized* (RMM72) inspired Paul Clements (star of 1982's *The Beast Within*) to drop a line to director Richard Gale. A year later, the fruits of their notorious collaboration arrived at the Rue Morgue House of Horror.

Taking the form of a fake movie trailer, Gale's latest stars Clements as Jack Cucchiara, a forensic pathologist on the run from his savage tormentor (Brian Robart), who wields what is perhaps the most terrifying weapon ever utilized in horror: a spoon. That's right, a spoon! Think about it for a moment — it would take years to kill someone by gently tapping them over and over again with such a benign household object.

And that's exactly what happens in this film. The relentless spoon-killer inexplicably pursues Jack through parking lots, libraries, alleyways, the deserts of New Mexico and even the pyramids of Egypt. But perhaps the best sequence is a faithful shot-by-shot recreation of the *Psycho* shower scene. But with a spoon!

If I had to nitpick, I'd say this utterly hilarious creation could've benefited from having a minute or two shaved off the first running time, but if you're the star of a criminally underrated 1980s genre masterpiece and happen to be reading this, please don't let that deter you from contacting Mr. Gale. The man is a genius.



WRETCHED

22 mins

wretchedmovie.com

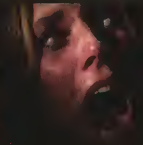
Co-directed by Leslie Delano and horror journalist Heidi Martinuzzi (graffy-scary.net), who also wrote the screenplay, *Wretched* stars Jaime Andrews as Jenny, a depressed housewife suffering from bulimia. Out for dinner with her unsympathetic husband, Eric (played by drive-in movie fetishist Joe Bob Briggs), Jenny

stuffs her grubby face with mounds of food while her husband lambastes her for neglecting her domestic duties. In between bouts of gorging and belts of abuse, Jenny makes numerous trips to the can to purge, accompanied by a voice-over that breaks down the grisly minutiae of the process. Eventually, things go hideously wrong and Jenny puked buckets of blood (courtesy of K&B effects master Greg Nicolero), only to end up crawling around on the washroom floor in a bloody mess, literalizing both implications of the film's title.

This is horror steeped in the grim realities of domestic disturbance. The overall impact doesn't quite hit the lows the filmmakers were probably hoping for but no one can deny how refreshing and powerful it is to see real horror by women tackling real women's issues.

WRETCHED

with music by Joe Bob Briggs



TERROR!

24 mins

prowestwardDVD.com

The recently released *Experiments in Terror 3* DVD compilation of shorts claims to "break the chains of narrative logic to leave only the black void of the infinite unconscious." Unfortunately, the only void it will leave is the space in your wallet where your hard-earned cash used to be.

However, there is one short here worth your time and trouble, and that's *Terror!* by Ben Rivers. Constructed entirely from footage culled from American slasher films and Italian horror movies too numerous to name, *Terror!* functions as both a clever deconstruction and loving send-up of horror movie conventions. Rivers attempts to recreate a typical murder set piece by cutting together numerous examples of the moody, evocative quiet moments that precede the carnage, to the heightened moments of anticipation when characters first sense something is wrong. From there, it's an endless series of actors stepping into dark rooms, looking out windows, calling out names and running through woods from unseen killers.

The tension is ratcheted up to an unbearable degree with an eventual release that is insane. It's an orgasmic explosion of ultra-violence — a symphony of slashed faces, snapped necks, severed limbs, crilled heads, torn throats, gouged-out eyes and exploding heads. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to find a box of Kleenex.

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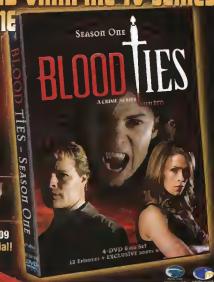
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REISSUES



House on Haunted Hill
The Vincent Price/William Castle
collection celebrates its 50th anniversary...

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HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL
50th ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION (1959)

Starring Vincent Price, Carol Ohmart
and Richard Long
Directed by William Castle
Written by Robb White
Raunchy Tonk

Unlike the elegantly mounted Poe adaptations that Vincent Price starred in during the 1960s for Roger Corman, the films he did for director/producer William Castle in the late 1950s were the cinematic equivalent of a funhouse ride. A first-rate showman and promoter, Castle released his thrillers complete with carnival-like gimmickry, including rigged theatre seats that would give audiences small "electrical shocks," for the 1959 flick *The Tangler*. For *House on Haunted Hill*, released earlier that year, Castle created "Emergo" – which featured a plastic



skeleton suspended on wires that swooped above audiences during screenings.

The film's plot sees millionaire Fredrick Loren (Price) and his fourth wife Annabelle (Carol Ohmart) invite five strangers to their home for a "haunted house" party, along with the promise that whoever can stay in the place for one night will receive \$10,000. The catch: anyone who decides to stay will be locked inside without electricity or means of escape – along with several marauding, murderous ghosts. Soon, the guests must contend with disembodied heads, organs that play by themselves, decrepit spectres and, of course, their sinister host.

Brimming with delicious black humour, *House on Haunted Hill* is a highly entertaining film. Price is in top form and the snappy script has him deliver some truly great lines, including the following one to Ohmart: "Do you re-

member the fun we had when you poisoned me?"

It's a movie that's been in the public domain for a long time, but cult film connoisseur Johnny Legend's Raunchy Tonk imprint has released a beautifully remastered widescreen 50th Anniversary Special Edition that's a world of difference from the cheapo version found on most bargain bin DVDs. Extras include original theatrical trailers, a William Castle promo TV spot, a profile on co-star Ohmart and a brief featurette, *Return to the House*, in which Legend discusses (on location) the history of the Mayan temple-looking house (the Ennis House in Los Feliz, California), which was used for the film's exteriors. Episodes of vintage television comedies *The Jack Benny* and *Red Skelton* shows are also included, each featuring appearances by the Merchant of Menace himself, which makes this a neat collectible for Price completists.

JAMES BURRELL

NOT TWISTED ENOUGH

SCORPION WITH TWO TAILS (1982)

Starring Elvire Audray, Paolo Malco
and Claudio Cassinelli
Directed by Sergio Martino
Written by Ernesto Gastaldi, Jacques Lehenne
and Maria Chiaretta
Myn Communications

One shouldn't be surprised that absolutely nothing depicted on the sleeve art appears in Sergio Martino's *Scorpion with Two Tails* (the knife-wielding, long-haired, black-eyed figure was used for a number of Italian zombie and slasher film publicity campaigns), but to deny us gore, nudity, sleaze or some original weirdness is downright criminal.

Not quite as juvenile as Martino's *Screamers* (but just as dull), *Scorpion* is part giallo, part supernatural yarn and part cop thriller. That clumsy combination stems from the film's original conception by four writers as a lengthy TV movie. The concept was abandoned in favour of a theatrical production, but the story still revolves around Joan (rapid and always-clothed Elvire Audray) travelling to Italy in the hope of understanding why her husband, prominent archaeologist Arthur Barnard (an earnest John Saxon), was killed over some Etruscan artifacts shipped to New York City by her father (a very hammy Van Johnson).

It turns out dad was in cahoots with local gangsters to ship "la cocaine" with a batch of



ancient vases to America, but Arthur chose to hide the drugs – in the same cave system where he discovered a sacrificial pit and secret hoodoo room, prior to having his neck twisted like a corkscrew.

Head-twisting by a mystery killer is the film's ongoing motif, and the mounting body count keeps the giallo strand alive, whereas the gangster loop is dumped midway through, since keeping so many actors on the payroll (including the beautiful but utterly wasted Minko To) was too costly. Virtually everyone dies in a bizarre cave shootout, and then Joan's discovery that she is a guardian for immortal spirits from a "cosmic egg" brings the film to a close. Turns out the mystical shenanigans were all tied to ancient spirits riled at having their sacred room and anti-gravity hippy lamp plundered by greedy crooks and schnooks!

Mya appears to have reconstructed an uncut version of *Scorpion with Two Tails* using footage from surviving prints and occasionally lesser sources, such as soft-focus video masters, and although widescreen, this is one amateurishly edited and badly shot film. DVD extras include material from a never-broadcast TV version, but one senses the producers knew they had a neutered shocker in either format. Soak up that cool DVD cover, then move on.

MARK R. HASAN

HILLBILLY GORE-MET

REDNECK ZOMBIES (1986)

Starring Lisa M. DeLaven, Buckly Sanders and William E. Benson
Directed by Pender Leewine
Written by Pender Leewine
Troma

In times when the papers are chock full o' bad news, a little mental holiday time is more important than ever, even if it's only for 90 minutes or so. Big, dumb fun is the prescription, and Troma's re-release of *Redneck Zombies* is precisely the barrel of lowbrow laughs the doctor ordered.

This here title accurately describes the film. A jive-talkin' soldier transporting a 55-gallon drum of "chemical warfare nuclear waste" in the back of a jeep loses his load after fumbling

a lit joint. His attempt to retrieve his deadly cargo is thwarted by a rotund, shotgun-totin' hillbilly named Ferd who just found hisself a new still. But his rivals, the Clemson clan – Pa, Junior, Jethro and sexually confused Billy Bob ("call me Ely Mae") – quickly strong-arm the drum from Ferd and git to making a new batch of com mash. Ely Mae loads up the family pick-up with cases of green 'shine and starts deliverin' 'em around the county while the boys sit and sample their new brew, which quickly turns them into flesh-eatin' undeads.

Meanwhile, a group of quarelin' city folk hike into a nearby campsite that their leader Wilbur touts as even having "a pond to piss in." They set up camp and relax with a bag of Columbian, but things go awry the next morn' when the zombiefied locals arrive. The gore is hot 'n' heavy as they git consumed while tryin' to escape.

Director Lewnes and conspirator Ed Bishop (a.k.a. "Zoolfeet" and "P. Floyd Piranha," respectively), cobbled together \$5000 to make this campy and gory comedy romp for the then-burgeoning home video market.

(Troma head Lloyd Kaufman cites it as the first shot-on-video feature.) Not only did they succeed at their admittedly small goal, they inadvertently influenced a generation of O.I.Y. filmmakers who would make shot-on-video films a staple of the horror genre in the '90s. *Redneck Zombies* is not only one of the pioneering SOV efforts; it's also one of the best. With gobs of lip-smackin' gore and clever homages to *The Evil Dead* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* it proves that even when times are tight, them's that know how to git by with what they got are gonna git through.

THE GORE-MET



Redneck Zombies: Features gobs of lip-smacking video gore galore.



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DON'T COME ALONE...

By DAVE ALEXANDER

ITS TARGET AUDIENCE WAS TOO YOUNG TO KNOW WHO HOST VINCENT PRICE WAS, MUCH LESS STAR BILLY VAN.

There were better-made puppets and more production value on *Sesame Street*. And as far as role models go, no one in Castle Frightenstein ever seemed to succeed. Yet, from the early '70s onward, kids across Canada and parts of the US tuned in regularly to *The Hilarious House of Frightenstein* to spend an hour (edited to a half-hour in some markets) with the outrageous cast of characters created for CHCH Channel 11 in Hamilton, Ontario. As the *Hilarious House of Frightenstein* Tribute Site (frightenstein.com) proclaims, "Whatever the reason, *Frightenstein* got into people's minds and it stuck there."

There's certainly more than one reason the 130-episode show is more popular than ever, but the main one is the roster of characters brought to life by Van and company. Anchor Bay and Critical Mass pay tribute to some of *Frightenstein*'s most beloved residents by following up the recent *Frightenstein* box set with three hour-long DVDs of additional material, each focusing on a particular fixture of the show.

Count *Frightenstein*'s sidekick Igor is first to be spotlighted with *Igormania*. Played by Fishka Reis (pictured below), he's really the kid or Castle *Frightenstein* innocent, unsure, full of child-like enthusiasm and regularly getting in trouble for using bad grammar. Igor brings the perspective of the show's main audience. In the first skit on this disc he comes in from the rain after pouring Jell-O powder into the moat.

Why? Every other castle has a shark-infested moat, so he thought *Frightenstein* could be different and have shark-infested Jell-O.

The green gargantuan is also our conduit to the larger unseen world of *Frightenstein* outside the castle walls whether he's travelling to Hawaii through a passageway, chiding The Blob over the phone for making a mess during his/its last visit or asking the never-seen Sixth if he's allowed to accept a gift animal from the visiting Dr. Pet Vet. The answer is always no, and although Igor is disappointed, he reminds us

that you can't always have what you want, and you must ask your parents (or sloth) first.

If Igor speaks to the children watching *Frightenstein*, then Grizelda (star of *Grizelda's Eat, Drink and Be Scary*) exemplifies how the show was also a wink and nod to adult viewers. A parody of famous chef Julia Child, played by Van in hideous witch drag, Grizelda the Ghastly Gourmet cackles away as she compliments her own beauty, posing to tell the likes of Elizabeth Taylor, Mama Cass, Yoko Ono and Sophia Loren to "eat your heart out" – before banging her head on a hanging pot and realising her latest dish is disgusting. She also answers letters read by mangy muppet Harvey Wallbanger at the Dead Letter Office, but she's at her best when whipping up gross-out meals sure to make any kid giggle, such as Maple Green Frankfurters in Soya Sauce à la Eeched. Van laughs and swoons as he tosses together ingredients such as old eggshells, "pomatoes" (move over, tomatoes), "iguana gblets," "Guff Powder" (?), tiger fur, "Guatemala gummy lumps" (?!) and rubber cement. As Grizelda says, "When we're cooking something that is so intriguing and deliciously delectable, delightful and tasty too, we have to add something that's going to spoil that."

(Disobedient *Frightenstein* fans will notice the inclusion of a skit on this disc in which Van does a markedly different version of the character – presumably he was still playing with the ingredients, so to speak.)

Aside from disgusting concoctions, kids also love hearing stories, and this is where the crusty, dusty Librarian comes in on *The Librarian's Not-So-Scary Tales*. Another Van character, the crevice-faced, white-haired keeper of the Castle's messy reading room invites viewers to pull up a musty chair and listen to morality tales. But despite his best spooky inflections, he always fails to impart something genuinely frightening (sorry, no amount of menacing bravado makes "The Tortoise and the Hare" the least bit scary). He does, however, reassure kids with reminders such as this one from a story about how little fish can slip through a fisherman's net: "The moral of that story is that it's sometimes safe to be insignificant, which means, we don't all have to be big, do we?"

Like most of the bits on these DVDs, *The Librarian's* segments are prefaced by Vincent Price's ghoulish rhyming intrus, and separated by other *Frightenstein* skits (*The Drade*, *The Gonks*, etc.). Delightfully, unlike other kids shows, you'll also hear mention of Poe and factoids about Magellan.

You just never quite know what your *Frightenstein* friends are going to say or do next – just one more reason the legendary show has stuck like cobwebs to a castle wall.





A TALE OF TWO BARBARAS

NIGHTMARE CASTLE (1965)

Starring Barbara Steele, Paul Muller and Helga Liné
 Directed by Mario Caiano
 Written by Mario Caiano and Fabio De Agostini
 Severin

Could a blonde wig be responsible for Barbara Steele's status as the dark queen of '60s Italian horror? Twentieth Century Fox bought out the raven-haired English actress' contract from British studio Rank in the late 1950s after Cary Grant expressed an interest in her. But Fox couldn't find a suitable project for the actress so it kept her out of commission for nearly two frustrating years before finally casting her opposite Elvis in the western *Flaming Star* (1960). Steele never completed the project. Varying sources suggest that either Fox let her go because of her heavy accent or she walked out of her own accord, allegedly because she felt that she looked ridiculous in a blonde wig. Either way, Fox broke her contract and Barbara Eden replaced her.

Effectively blackballed in Hollywood, Steele fled to Rome. There she was cast in Mario Bava's classic *Black Sunday* (1960), in the dual role of the resurrected witch Asa and her descendant Katia. The film was a modest success, and Steele's unique look—high cheekbones, large eyes, jet black hair—and ability to convincingly play both good and evil led her to star in several other Italian horror productions of varying quality.

One of the best was 1965's *Nightmare Castle*. Released as *Night of the Doomed* in England, it finds Steele in another dual role, this time as both

19th-century English baroness Muriel Arrowsmith and her mortally fragile stepsister, Jenny. Muriel, imperious and not particularly likeable, is unhappily married to Stephen (Paul Muller: *Vampyrus Lesbos*, *Eugénie*), a scientist engaged in "dirty experiments." After pretending to leave for a conference, Stephen catches Muriel in the arms of their servant David (Rik Battaglia: *Sister Emanuelle*). Enraged, he chains them up and tortures them.

Muriel vows to punish Stephen from beyond the grave and informs him she has changed her will. Instead of Stephen, her "smperring idiot" half-sister Jenny will inherit the family fortune. Disturbingly unperturbed, Stephen concocts a plan: kill Muriel and her "foul friend" David, and use his dead wife's blood to restore youth to his own lover (and servant) Solange (Helga Liné: *Horror Express*, *Horror Rises From the Tomb*). He will then marry the unstable Jenny, drive her mad, and regain control over her money.

Like she did in *Black Sunday*, Steele excels in this double role, particularly in the sequences where the placid Jenny (distinguished from Muriel—ironically, given her *Flaming Star* expe-

rience—by a blonde wig) is possessed by her stepsister's vengeful spirit. Cinematographer Enzo Barboni (*Django*) expertly plays with light and shadow to make her seductive and soft before making love to David, then macabre and menacing as the resurrected spectre about to wreak vengeance.

Nightmare Castle is far from perfect. In his only credited movie, the too-young Lawrence Clift is miscast as Jenny's doctor. The second act, consisting primarily of discussions of Jenny's sanity, is repetitive. And the dodgy dubbing of dialogue written with a tin ear for conversation is off-putting.

Additionally, director Mario Caiano isn't as accomplished a stylist as Bava, a technician renowned for doing his own effects. *Castle* does, however, boast one haunting sequence in which Jenny, as Muriel, dreams of David's attack by a masked stranger. The effect is surreal and eerie, especially given that the actors move in slow-motion through the scene as opposed to the film itself being shot at a different speed.

In some ways, *Nightmare Castle* is actually superior to *Black Sunday*, which is considered a classic of gothic Italian horror despite serious logical flaws. For one, Caiano is working from a more coherent script (co-written by *In The Folds of the Flesh* scenarist Fabio De Agostini), one with a truer emotional core—most notably in the interactions between the controlling Stephen

and the trapped Jenny, who refers to her lavish home as a "magnificent prison." Adding to the oppressive atmosphere is a portentous, organ-heavy score by composer Ennio Morricone.

A public domain title, *Nightmare Castle* has been released on DVD several times, usually in a censored, 85-minute version transferred from a dodgy print. In 2003, Retro Media put out a far superior letterboxed edition under the title *The Faceless Monster*, which re-

stored five minutes of footage. Now Severin has gone a step further by restoring the uncut version in high definition from the original negative and adding two featurettes (one with Steele, the other with Caiano), thus preserving a worthy black and white film that boasts more than a few shades of grey.

SEAN PLIMMER



CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT



DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

ALL FOR KNOTTS

by John W. Bowen

Our founder/publisher/benevolent despot Rodrigo traces his love of horror back to growing up Catholic and studying philosophy. Editor-in-Chief Jovanika says she was pretty much born with a mile-long morbid streak that was further inflamed by childhood trauma, while Managing Editor Dave recalls an early love of dinosaurs that blossomed into a general fascination with all things big, monstrous and threatening. I, however, must admit I've never found a truly satisfactory psychological explanation for my horror fetish. I consider myself spiritual but not religious, my early childhood was happy and while I dug dnos as much as the next kid, it wasn't a lasting thing. And this much, Long-Suffering Reader, is also certain: it sure ain't in my gene pool.

When it comes to fright flicks, my immediate and extended family is a pitifully squeamish crew of eye-coverers, pillow-shielders, chair-hiders and lobby-dashers. This even includes my career-criminal father — papa was indeed a rolling stone, but despite having done considerable time in some extremely gnarly institutions, it's safe to say *The Exorcist* would likely have had him cowering under a cinema seat with the rest of the clan. So why, to this day, do I still associate one sentimental favourite horror film exclusively with my late maternal grandmother? Three words. Don't freakin' Knotts.

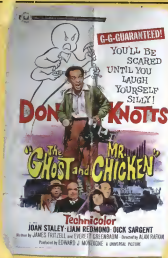
Gram loved Don Knotts and I loved Gram. And although she has long since departed these shores, my own fondness for that neurotic, pencil-necked, bug-eyed, slack-jawed, wobbly-kneed loudmouth (Knotts, that is, not Gram) remains strong enough that I can regularly revisit the lightweight, G-rated 1966 Knotts vehicle *The Ghost and Mr. Chicken*.

With Knotts frequently outshining his fellow cast members on the popular TV sitcom *The Andy Griffith Show*, Universal launched a series of features in the late 1960s to showcase his physical comedy talents. In *The Ghost and Mr. Chicken*, Knotts' Griffith Show character Barney Rife has been renamed Luther Hogg, and instead of a sheriff's

deputy, he is a newspaper typesetter, but that's where the significant differences between Barney and Luther end. Both are nebbishy, awkward, small-town losers who dream of rising above their stations (Barney aspires to be a respected and feared lawman while Luther wants to become a bona fide reporter), both are prone to humiliating gaffes that repeatedly scuttle those lofty goals.

Luther gets his Rocky Balboa-worthy long shot at glory when his editor hands him a prestigious, if daunting, journalistic assignment: spend the night in the local (allegedly) haunted house on the twentieth anniversary of an infamous murder-suicide. The editor, of course, has his reasons for sending Luther rather than his go-to star writer — with Luther's general ineptitude and tendency toward hysteria, chaos will likely ensue and papers will sell like hotcakes. (I assure you, this is accurate — editors really are the coldest motherf---ers this side of Harvey Weinstein.)

Penned by Andy Griffith Show scribes James Fritzell and Everett Greenbaum, *Mr. Chicken* may spin around a very shopworn plot but the writing, performances and direction keep it remarkably fresh. It's also something of an anomaly for its era, a wholesome, family-friendly comedy that's blessedly devoid of family values propaganda. It's rarely cited as influential in the genre, and yet the film boasts a trademark *Scoby-Doo* ending three years before anyone knew what that was. The Shaggy/Scoby traits in Luther's personality are even more noteworthy; our cowardly hero almost always manages to summon a shred of bravery when he really needs one, and failing that, sometimes prevails purely by accident.



Our own Gore-Met recently pointed out to me a number of similarities between *Mr. Chicken* and the Sammo Hung Kam-Bo 1980 kung-fu comedy *Spooky Encounters*, in which yet another physical comedy virtuoso braves a night in a creaky dump crawling with spooks. And then there's that self-actualizing Victoria — *Evil Dead*, anyone? Knotts is the film's heart and soul, but he's surrounded by extraordinarily talented supporting players who shine brightly, if briefly (in particular, sequences involving an inept elevator operator might well have struck envy into the hearts of the Marx Brothers).

Shout-outs to one's grandparents are understandably rare in *Rue Morgue* but I think one's very much in order here, and while I'm not entirely sure where Gram's residing these days, let's hope they have a 24/7 all-Don-Knotts channel. So there you have it: my *Ghost* and *Mr. Chicken* has been satisfactorily explained. The rest, however, may require deeper thought, so you'd best stand back in case of a Scanners-style head explosion. Or better still, just get the hell out of my basement. 🍷

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BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

BY PEDRO CABEZUELO

High school can be hell. Bullying, exams, proms, gym class – personally, I'd rather face an army of zombies any day. Perhaps this is why schools feature prominently in so many horror stories; just the sight of a hallway lined with lockers is enough to make your flesh crawl. The latest twisted tale to venture back to class is *Bad Kids Go to Hell*, a three-issue comic mini-series filled with angst-ridden teens, a haunted school and killer cockroaches.

Like many supernatural tales, its origin is grounded firmly in reality. One night, co-writers Matt Spradlin and Barry Wernick were walking around Beverly Hills when they spotted a group of obnoxious teens. It wasn't long before they started trading horror stories about their own high school days.

"Our schools were fucking ruthless," confesses Spradlin. "A day didn't go by that some chick wasn't crying or some guy hadn't had his ass handed to him. We thought, 'What if the Lindsay Lohan-like characters we knew growing up were in *The Breakfast Club* and had to serve detention with Christian Slater and Winona Ryder's characters from *Heathers*?' *BKGH* was the inevitable answer from two guys who grew up in the '80s watching too many horror movies and reading too many comics."

Fans of *The Breakfast Club* will spot the similarities right away. A group of dysfunctional high school teens gather together one Saturday to serve detention. Locked away in the newly built – and immensely creepy – library, they each have to come up with a written essay detailing the history of their snobby, upper-class school. Unlike Judd Nelson and crew, however, this band of misfits happens to attend a school built around an Apache tribe's burial ground.

Before the detention starts, readers are treated to a brief flashback, set during the build-

ing of the library. Here, we witness the mysterious death of a construction worker, whose desiccated, cockroach-covered corpse is found only minutes after he plunges into a pit.

"The story starts off very loose," notes artist Anthony Vargas. "After the first few pages you understand that there are some strange things going on at this school. Roaches are crawling everywhere, a construction worker dies, and in the midst of all this you've got high school kids running around."

Indeed, once the initial horror shocks are out of the way, the bulk of the first issue is spent ensuring that readers become intimately familiar with each of the students. Characterization is key to this story and something that Spradlin is keen to emphasize. As a result there is little gore or violence in this installment, although there are plenty of hints that blood will run in the future. For now, however, there is a strong emphasis on atmosphere and setting.

While some of the characters begin to have strange visions, others react with animosity to being "trapped" within the institution. "A main difference from other stories I've done is in keeping with this idea of isolation," says Vargas. "The students are literally stuck in this library. The doors are locked, they have no cell phones and the internet is limited to library book info."



Bad Kids Go To Hell Proves that schools shouldn't be built on Indian burial grounds

This particular library oozes with menace. The building is drawn in an almost gothic style, with long corridors, a multitude of hidden rooms and those pesky roaches hiding in every corner. "My school was a really old building which was actually a converted church rectory," relates Vargas. "It was lined with old wood floors and had holes in the walls. So it was easy for me to picture the roach infestation depicted in *BKGH*."

The result is a somewhat classical setting for a modern urban horror tale. And like the best horror stories, Spradlin says *Bad Kids* doesn't shy away from social commentary. In this case the violent trend in current youth culture.

"It's weird – you get older, and one day you look around, and as bad as you remember seeing people your age acting at the time, you see it's gotten worse."

Bad Kids Go to Hell #1 is out June 2009 from Antarctic Press.



Raffaele Ienco has managed quite the impressive feat: he's created a race of creatures that will actually freak you out. This alone would make *Devoid of Life* worth a read. But the graphic novel also contains a compelling and suspenseful story, too. The Xenos are highly xenophobic and destroy anyone who stumbles upon their existence. They are even known to destroy entire planets, as Earth is about to find out unless police chief Rochelle Bonner and her estranged husband solve the mystery of the bizarre creatures. Despite the excellent premise, the graphic novel isn't perfect, though. Sometimes the story gets a bit convoluted and certain threads don't quite gel. But the Xenos are brilliant enough to maintain the reader's attention throughout. Check it out, especially if you're looking for something new that isn't based on a book/film/existing brand.



Sometimes the first issue of a new series can be tough to judge. Usually, most of the groundwork and exposition for the main story is set up in the first installment. If managed skillfully, this can pique the reader's interest and leave them salivating for more. Or, you end up with an entry that does little but set up the rest of the story in a dull, lackluster manner. Fall of Cthulhu: Nemes is #1, unfortunately, falls into the latter category. The majority of the issue takes place in Ancient Atlantis, circa



is quick, the art appealing and the issue's story is self-contained with an appropriate beginning, middle and end. It's doubtful that I'll be sitting down for a *Buffy* marathon anytime soon, but I may be tempted to pick up another issue.

Irredeemable opens with the vicious and bloody massacre of a family. Shockingly, the murderer isn't a machete-wielding maniac or a multi-armed monster. Rather, this horrific act is committed by The Plutonian, a former hero, who for reasons still unknown is determined to murder his past teammates and anyone else who gets in the way. Writer Mark



Waid (*Kingdom Come*, *Empire*) is no stranger to tales of heroes gone bad, who are now abusing

their power, but *Irredeemable* feels different; it's rawer and more brutal than his previous works but just as fascinating. The issue hints at more horrors to follow, both physical and psychological, making this series a must-read.

Stephen King's Dark Tower novels have spawned a series of comic book prequels, the latest being this one-shot. On the surface *Sorcerer* serves as a bridge between the previous comic, *Treachery*, and the upcoming finale, *The Fall of Gilead*, and it accomplishes this adequately. At the same time it also sheds some light on the background of evil wizard Marten Broadcloak and his machinations. Here, readers will learn more about Marten's birth and upbringing, his seduction of Roland Deschain's mother and his somewhat incestuous relationship with the Jinn in the Grapefruit. If the above sounds like a bunch of hooey to you, chances are you're unfamiliar with King's *Dark Tower* mythology. That said, despite catering to fans, this comic also serves as a good introduction to DT's world for the uninitiated, with plenty of gore and black magic to satisfy the average horror fan.



9600 B.C., where King Levin is about to launch an attack on Athens but is troubled by a new sect of Atlanteans, worshippers of dark god Nyarlathotep who predicts his doom. Levin sends his brother to consult with the Oracle—and that's pretty much it. The writing and artwork are competent enough but the main problem with the issue is that it takes 21 pages to tell roughly five pages of actual story. It's possible that the rest of the series will be brilliant, but there's little here to make me want to stick around and find out.

I'll admit I'm not a Buffy fan. In fact, just the sight of *Buffy* makes me want to drive a stake right through her face. So it was with some trepidation I picked up this comic. But I believe that a good title will entertain anyone,

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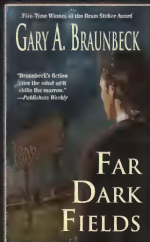
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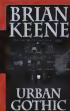
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SUPERNATURAL: THE OFFICIAL
COMPANION SEASON 3Nicholas Knight
Titan

After reading this third volume in Titan's ongoing series of episode companions to TV's *Supernatural*, I have just one question: why can't this company release books like this for all my favourite television series? No, seriously, it is *that* good.

What separates this volume and its predecessors from the far-more-typical herd of rapidly churned-out episode guides is, first and foremost, the level of involvement of the show's creator, as well as its cast, writers, composer and other crew – the book is jammed-packed with honest, insightful interviews. As I said back in *RM79* when I reviewed the official companion to *Supernatural*'s second season, if you really want to know what goes on behind the scenes of a TV series, these books are an excellent place to start.

Season three's storyline saw Dean (Jensen Ackles) forced to come to terms with the fact that he has one year to live, after making a deal with the Crossroads Demon at the end of season two to bring his brother Sam (Jared Padalecki) back to life. Behind the scenes, the show's creative team had its own big issues to grapple with, namely a lengthy mid-season writer's strike. How this work stoppage affected and influenced the scripts and plot arc is discussed in detail, as are the demands sent down from the studio and network in regards to casting (add

two female characters) and the show's look and feel (make it "brighter," increase its scope).

Of course there are also the expected episode summaries (each book-length with commentary about the production), snippets of trivia and sixteen glossy full-colour pages of pictures. But that's not all; throughout the slim-but-dense 160-page volume are sidebars concerning the folklore and mythological beasts that inspired the various episodes – everything from changelings, crocodas (shape-shifters) and witches to the demonic hierarchy and ghost ships. The book is further rounded out with short chapters devoted to specific cast (leads and recurring characters) and crew members (SFX makeup dept., location managers, property master), a recent novelization, fan and critical reaction and more. Frankly, it's hard to imagine what else they could have added to this smorgasbord of *Supernatural*.

That said, I'm willing to bet even the most diehard devotee of the series will learn something new from this book, and as such, I simply can't recommend it enough. So, Titan, how about tackling a few other shows? I'd be happy to send you my shortlist.

MONICA S. KUEBLER

MONSTER MOVIES

Emma Westwood
Pocket Essentials

Australian journalist Emma Westwood knows her movie monsters – and her monster movies – but more importantly, she has a solid understanding of the essence of monstrosity, without

which all would be for naught. She doesn't waste a lot of ink on dry academic dissertation, though; this being a Pocket Essentials edition, she establishes her thesis solidly and concisely and gets the hell on with it. Guest essays from her supporting cast, including renowned monster mavens John Carpenter, Larry Cohen, Roger Corman, Bong Joon-ho and more, are hit and miss but hard to resist. Westwood and friends pack a wealth of analysis into these scant 192 pages, making this one of the better entries in Pocket's ever-burgeoning collection of compact pop culture treatises. Legacies are cross-referenced with folkloric ties and religious roots, trends are tracked and overlooked gems unearthed (*Ginger Snaps* and *Q the Winged Serpent* – yay!). It's almost all here, if often in necessarily truncated form. If Westwood sometimes chooses to colour outside the lines – *Supria*, *The Emancipator*, *The Evil Dead* and *Re-Animator* are classic horror films, but their status as monster movies *per se* is tenuous at best – she appears to be erring on the side of thoroughness.

This, of course, leads us to *Obligatory Quibble Time*: it's not just that *Humanoids* from *The Deep* and *Pumpkinhead* are favourites of *Five Morgue* in general and thus scribe in particular, but they're simply too iconic in the latter-day pantheon to be completely overlooked in any survey of monster archetypes. They may be second string next to *Frankenstein*, *King Kong* and *Alien*, but to exclude them in favour of *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman*, *Pitch Black* and *Deep Rising* is sheer folly. A fatal flaw? In my view not quite, but how about you?

JOHN W. BOWEN

THE GRIM READER

EROTIC COMICS: A GRAPHIC HISTORY VOL. 2

Tim Picher

Abrams ComicArts

The second in a series of essay art books on the history of smutty comics promptly picks up where the first book left off: the 1970s. While its prime directive is the examination of evolving cultural attitudes toward the movement, the inclusion of reliable erotic horror titles and imprints such as Glenn Danzig's Verotik line (*Die Rouge*, *Satanika*, *Grab Girl*) and Fran's Menzink's *Kraken*, *Queen of Vampires* makes it worth adding to your library. Plus, it's full of dirty drawings!



JOVANKA VUCKOVIC

TRAPS

Scott T. Goodward, ed.

Darkman Press

Don't let the promise of hypnotizing demons and alluring nymphs trap you into reading this inconsistent anthology. Proposing to focus on wily tricksters and headbitch plots, Goodward confuses the theme by including several off-type, albeit more interesting, short tales. This makes for a patchy read, seemingly without flow or direction. A must-skip, given the vast number of superior horror collections already out there.



JESSA SOBCHIK

MIDNIGHT GRINDING AND OTHER TWILIGHT TALES

Ronald Kelly

Cemetery Dance

Ronald Kelly's latest anthology of 32 gruesome short stories set in the Deep South is simply oozing with terrifying tales about mist-shrouded bayous, creepy carnivals, cannibalistic Indian warriors, dead babies and gigantic spiders. His unique brand of antiquated Southern horror will ensure that you never dare venture below the Mason-Dixon line again.



LAST CHANCE LANGE

HUNTED

PC Cast and Kristin Cast

St. Martin's

While this fifth book in the young adult *House of Night* series goes to great lengths to advance its ever-evolving vampire mythos — and features the return of a very dangerous and powerful old fallen angel — it completely sabotages itself by way of a ridiculous soap opera-like romantic subplot. A weak entry in an otherwise clever (and surprisingly violent) saga.



MONICA S. KUENLER



THE PLEASURE AND PAIN OF CULT HORROR FILMS: AN HISTORICAL SURVEY

Bartłomiej Paszyk

McFarland

Note to horror know-it-alls: do not, I repeat DO NOT make any genre-related bar bets with Bartłomiej Paszyk, because he will stay you. In his book *The Pleasure and Pain of Cult Horror Films: An Historical Survey*, he quotes from seemingly every damn academic article, interview and notable review related to the movies he covers, and imparts enough facts about the flicks to make one suspect he's really just a glowing brain and a set of eyes floating in a jar, absorbing genre-related information all day.

Did you know that Brian Yuzna's *Society* concerns "the application of Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulacra"? That when Mario Bava adapted *Black Sunday* from Nicholas Gogol's short story "The Vix," the only thing left intact from the source material was "a vengeful old witch"? Or that *Black Christmas* hints at the 1973 Roe v. Wade case and can be seen as a metaphor for terrorism?

That said, don't assume this is a stuffy academic tome. Rather, Paszyk has written knowledgeable yet approachable two-page essays on 88 movies, ranging from the silent era to the mid-2000s. After an insightful intro that discusses what does and does not constitute a "cult" film (and the inherent grey areas), he travels all over the genre through chapters titled "The Root of All Horror," "Monsters and Madmen," "To Scare the World," "The Nasty Eighties" and "The New Weirdness." He covers more common titles (at least to horror fans), such as *Freaks*, *House of Wax*, *Blood Feast*, *Swamp Thing* and *Bubba Ho-Tep*, but delves into obscure stuff as well, including *Between Two Worlds*, *Dr. Cyclops*, *The Sargasso Manuscript*, *Escape 2000* and *Benny's Video*. Sometimes he gets academic (e.g. studying the different metaphors in *Eyes Without a Face*), and other times he just wants to tell you about a wonky little film that deserves some extra attention (*The Slink of Flesh*).

If you're a fan of the Cinemarquee section of *Rue Morgue*, snag this book. And remember: if you walk into a drinking establishment and a glowing brain in a jar challenges you to a horror trivia contest, walk away. Just walk away...

DAVE ALEXANDER

BLOODLETTING

Michael McBride

Dellium

Exsanguination is a messy business, but also — judging from several recent horror releases — a valuable skill that's in increasing demand. In Jeff Lindsay's *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*, the Tam-

DWIGHT KEMPER CASTS THE LATE BELA LUGOSI, BORIS KARLOFF AND OTHER GENRE ROYALTY IN A SERIES OF ORIGINAL MURDER MYSTERIES.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF BELA LUGOSI

BY JAMES BURRELL

THOUGH IT'S BEEN MORE THAN 50 YEARS since Bela Lugosi shuffled off his mortal coil, the ongoing fascination with cinema's first, and arguably most beloved, Count Dracula continues. Now, joining the numerous documentaries, non-fiction books and fan culture memorabilia featuring the man, is something a little stranger.

Since mid-2007, author Dwight Kemper has been making a name for himself by casting real-life genre stars of yesteryear in a series of alternate reality murder mysteries set on old-time movie sets. With his latest offering, *Bela Lugosi and the House of Doom* (available from Midnight Marquee Press), Kemper pays homage to the troubled yet charismatic star in a highly inventive take on the classic pulp novel. But Lugosi is far from the only icon Kemper cast in his tale. He also recruited Boris Karloff, Basil Rathbone, Lon Chaney Jr. and Glenn Strange for this fictional excursion that sees an aging Lugosi, with the help of amateur sleuth Lou Costello, using deductive reasoning to solve a series of crimes taking place on the Universal Studios set during filming of the 1948 rump *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*. Kemper, a devoted fan of classic horror, typically finds his inspiration for these unusual stories in old photographs and vintage film outtakes.

"In the case of [the first book], *Who Framed Boris Karloff?*, it was a photograph that I have of Karloff

in full Frankenstein Monster makeup cutting a birthday cake on the set of *Son of Frankenstein*," reveals Kemper, who also creates original mystery plays and dinner theatre shows. "I have a rather twisted imagination and I thought to myself, 'Sure, it looks like everything is all smiles and celebration, but what if somewhere on that set is a dead body ready to be discovered?'"

Likewise, *Bela Lugosi and the House of Doom* was inspired by an outtake from *Abbott and Costello Meet*

Frankenstein, where Lugosi is coming down the stairs and he's interrupted by a costumed Bobby Barber — a comic who was hired to act as court jester in order to liven up the set.

"From there, I just let my imagination take over and guide my fingers on the keyboard," he says. "I watch the story unfold in my mind as a movie and I transcribe what I see."

Ever a stickler for detail, Kemper does extensive research for his projects, and though he may occasionally place his characters in fictional settings or bizarre situations, he still tries to be as authentic as possible. To correctly portray Boris Karloff in *Who Framed Boris Karloff?*, Kemper contacted the actor's daughter, Sara, to get her input. (She also provided a foreword for the book.)

"I asked her if she might help me with the characterization of her father," the author explains. "You know, tell me if I got his dialogue right, his moods,

and so forth. She let me bounce ideas off of her... and would tell me things that I never knew."

For his latest book, which centres on Lugosi, he took a different approach.

"I've read a lot about him and have several interviews on DVD," Kemper says. "From what I read, Lugosi could be loquacious, or charming, or demanding, or controlling. So when it came time to feature him in his own story, I had to expand on that and deal with things like his growing addiction to painkillers, the problems he and [then wife] Lillian were having marriage-wise and his career disappointments. I do a lot to get the characterizations as accurate as I can and still keep things entertaining. Maybe the real Lugosi wasn't quite so quick with the one-liners, but I imagine he might say many of the things I have him saying."

In addition to penning *Bela Lugosi and the House of Doom*, Kemper also drew the 25 illustrations that appear within its pages, over the course of what he describes as "a very hectic two months." He is presently working on two more novels, *Basil Rathbone and the Curse of Conan Doyle* and a second installment featuring Lugosi, titled *Bela Lugosi's Final Curtain*.

"The [story] takes place at Bela's funeral," Kemper reveals. "It concerns the mysterious disappearance of Edward D. Wood, Jr., who puts a disappearing act during a riot at [Lugosi's] viewing at the Utter-McKinley Mortuaries. Psychic Charles Criswell King is the amateur sleuth. The whole Ed Wood company is involved in the case as suspects. And as part of the fictional mystery, I hint that Bela's death may not have been from natural causes."



IN THE LAND OF LONG FINGERNAILS:

A MEMOIR

Charles Wilkins
Viking Canada

While bookstores are filled with innumerable memoirs by celebrities and business tycoons, few, if any, recollect life's more macabre occupations and inclinations as candidly as Charles Wilkins' *In the Land of Long Fingernails*. The non-fiction book concerns the five months during the summer of 1969 that the then-nineteen-year-old Wilkins worked as a gravedigger at one of Toronto's largest cemeteries. And if there is any doubt as to what sort of tale this is, it is made unequivocally clear in the Author's Note that precedes it. Here, Wilkins confesses to having changed the names of both his former co-workers and the burial ground, as to "call it by its real name in this era of inquisitorial conformity would be an open invitation to, at best, a lawsuit, at worst a contract hit — on me."

Over the course of the book, readers are indoctrinated to the crude lingo of the profession, including terms such as "sinkers," "stinkers," "cracker boxes" and "sod-tops," and bear witness to several

burials, as well as one very messy, reeking disinterment. The cemetery's underpaid pothead employees exist in a state of chronic disenchantment with their jobs and their raging alcoholic boss. They routinely break laws by opening coffins to peek at their occupants or pillage the valuables. As the book progresses, even odder tales are related, including one about human bones which surface in a neighbouring resident's garden, and another about old burials being exhumed and dumped into an on-site quarry so the plots can be resold. We also discover exactly what happens when a lengthy gravedigger's strike takes place during a heat-wave and bodies can not be interred.

In the end, however, it is not the illegal activities or the boneyard urban legends that are most compelling. Instead, it is the human story that emerges from this morbid backdrop — one of dreams, unfulfilled goals, unexpected compassion and the ultimate fragility of friendship and life. Without this element, *In the Land of Long Fingernails* would merely be sensationalistic, but instead it becomes something truly poignant.

MORRIS A. THORNTON

ami Butcher drains blood from his victims like it's an art form; for Håkan in *Let the Right One In*, it is a method of survival. But for the aspiring phlebotomist in *Bloodletting*, the latest novel from emerging author Michael McBride, it seems draining corpses is the only option, as the blood of his victims — all young girls on the brink of puberty — hides a terrible genetic secret.

Hot on this titular bloodletter's trail are FBI agent Paxton Carver and Dr. Elliot Archer, an archaeologist who is called in to survey a recently unearthed mass grave. It soon becomes clear that something more sinister is going on than a bloodletter merely dumping bodies and attempting to disguise his handiwork as an ancient Incan burial site. The pair discovers that the corpses have been drained and smoked rather than mummified, as first suspected. Also, various limbs and organs are missing, and further forensic analysis shows that all the girls share similar genetic anomalies. As the duo delves even deeper, they uncover a gruesome government conspiracy in which the bloodletter plays a very unexpected role.

In addition to this overly complex and ever-twisting plotline, the book is mired in procedural and forensic details, which means it reads more like a crime-fiction novel than a traditional horror story. Most of the gory details are recounted in passing dialogue between the agents, forensics lab employees and Archer as they focus on solving the case.

McBride's writing is sharp and effectively descriptive, and the novel would undoubtedly satisfy any crime-fiction bibliophile. However, for horror fans who are used to a faster pace and more intense first-hand action, this book might prove to be a wasted effort, as the horror in *Bloodletting* is more of a slow-bleed than a gushing torrent.

JESSA SOBICZUK

HORROR STORY AND OTHER STORIES

Robert Boyczuk
Chizine Publications

With a title as generic as a No Frills label, Robert Boyczuk's *Horror Story and Other Stories* ironically announces itself as anything but another collection of genre fiction. So readers shouldn't be too surprised or disappointed to discover that many of the stories steer clear of traditional horror

scenarios. Zombies, haunted houses and vampires are in short supply, and in this case that's not a bad thing.

Boyczuk may hold back on the capital M monsters, but there is enough atmosphere in most of these stories to fill out an entire novel. Boyczuk often focuses on very authentic-feeling dysfunctional relationships or isolated, obsessive protagonists, then adds an element of the supernatural or surreal to the storyline, heightening the atmosphere of dread to the boiling point. The stories also playfully blend elements borrowed from the science fiction, mystery and suspense genres, creating a metafictional hybrid that never gets too clever for its own good. Literature lovers are just as likely to spot a clever nod to Kafka or Borges as to Poe or Lovecraft.



Particularly noteworthy are "The Love Clinic," about a man so desperate to rid himself of intrusive sexual desires that he submits to a bizarre medical treatment, and "Gaytown," a powerful story of a semi-closeted gay couple who find themselves trapped in a small town that is not what it seems to be. Boyczuk builds up his hauntings and often gruesome metaphors and imagery from the base of his stories' human relationships, which imbues his fiction with an uncanniness that mimics the feeling of being trapped in a maze-like dream.

Readers need not worry, however. The horror here is very real — Boyczuk just wants you to have a little fun finding it.

JAMES GRANGER



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TRAVELOGUE OF TERROR

OLD MONTREAL GHOST WALK — MONTREAL, QUÉBEC

BY MARIE-ÈVE LARIN



OLD MONTREAL IS LIKE A MISSING PIECE OF EUROPE THAT GOT LOST A FEW CENTURIES AGO AND LANDED IN EASTERN CANADA.

The historic architecture, the horse-drawn carriages, and the majesty of the Neo-Gothic Notre-Dame Basilica all contribute to the feeling of being in another time and country when walking along the cobblestone streets. This jewel of Québec's metropolis has a history thick with ghost stories, all part of the local charm and folklore.

Many claim to have seen or heard supernatural entities in the various luxury boutique hotels and buildings around town. It's not surprising considering Montreal's history is marked with violence and death. First, there were territory wars among the Indian tribes, in order to take control of the best available land; then the French arrived in New-France, founded the city of Montreal in 1642 and proceeded to carry out genocide against the natives. Later, in 1760, the French were conquered by the English, beginning an

often acrimonious relationship between the two cultures. Add to that, the crime that a bustling port city attracts, the often brutal punishments for wrongdoing and the general harshness of everyday life in previous centuries, and surely there are more than a few anguished spirits lurking around.

The best way to learn about the areas popular spectral activity is to take one of the Guidetour company's Old Montreal ghost walks in the summer. The guided tours start in front of the statue of *Seur Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve* in the *Place d'Armes*, one of the city's most beautiful squares. This statue is a tribute to the early years of the then-French colony, and on its side is a violent bas-relief, depicting Chomedey slaying Iroquois fighters.

Once on the Ghost Tour, expect to hear about a dozen tales of the dead told by a raconteur wearing tattered period clothing and Halloween makeup. (There are two different versions of this tour offered: one for the east side and one for the west side of Old Montreal, as there are too many tales to contain in a single 90-minute session.) This particular walk covers the east side and leaves the *Place d'Armes* for the *St-Gabriel Inn*, the oldest lodging house in the city. The tour doesn't go inside the auberge, but the outside view is impressive: a big field house, made mostly of limestone, constructed according to the old European architectural standards. Here, the guide introduces two of the area's oldest spirits.

The chilling story goes back to the beginnings of the colony, when the fur trade was the city's main activity. A trader who lived at the site hired an arsonist to set fire to a competitor's house, then took over his former rival's trade, becoming very rich in the process. Then the arsonist decided to raise his price, but the trader refused to meet this new demand. A fight ensued and both men stabbed each other to death. The last gesture of the arsonist was to set a barrel of gunpowder on fire, which destroyed the house and killed the trader's father and young daughter, who were playing piano on the second floor at the time. According to the tour guide, ghostly piano strains can sometimes still be heard emanating from the upstairs room.

The tour then moves on to the *Field of Mars*, a park in the heart of the Old City, where the original foundations of the wall that surrounded the colony can be seen poking out of the grass. Aside from

boasting a spectacular view, this is where the English regime preferred to carry out public executions — hanging murders, rapists and other criminals. The most famous execution took place on August 30, 1833, when *Aldolphus Dewey* was hanged for trying to stab his pregnant wife to death because he thought she was unfaithful.

From here, the guide points out the *Mont-Royal* mountain, where Montreal's two main cemeteries are located on the north side. He reveals that human remains have been found on the south side during digs, including those of *Simon McTavish*. He was the richest man in town in the early 1800s and had his summer house built on *Mont-Royal*, but died during its construction. His ghost is reputed to be seen sitting upright in his coffin as it slides down the mountain. The guide explains that the tale originated after medical students pilaged his tomb and sent his remains down the hill by coffin at night — at the turn of the century grave-robbing was a common practice as it was illegal to dissect human bodies.

The tour moves on to *Bonsecours Market*, at the corner of *St. Paul* and *Bonsecours St.*, to a great white building topped by a majestic silver dome. Here, one of Old Montreal's most heinous and bloody crimes took place. The guide tells the tale of Montreal's most famous ghost, *Mary Gallagher*. Gallagher was a prostitute, and one night in 1879 she and best friend *Susan Kennedy* walked to the Market to greet the sailors who came ashore from the *St. Lawrence River*, get drunk and make some money. They propositioned a young man named *Michael Flanagan* and the three of them went back to Kennedy's house on *William Street* to party. Although Susan had her eye on Flanagan, he was interested in Mary. When he passed out, Mary bent down to help him and, in a fit of jealous rage, Susan hit her with a bottle, then chopped off her noggin with an axe. She placed her best friend's head in a bucket near the fireplace.

It's said that if you walk around the corner of *Murray* and *Williams Streets* you might see Gallagher's ghost prowling the vacant lot on the southeast side, still looking for her head. Legend has it that she returns every seven years to search for it.

The next stop is the *Place Jacques Cartier* (*Jacques Cartier Square*), which is now a touristy area filled with restaurants and souvenir shops, but was once a marketplace where blasphemers, bur-



glars and rapists were taunted and tortured. Criminals were whipped with a cat o' nine tails, some had their tongues cut out in convictions of blasphemy; while others were put in the stocks so peasants could throw things at them (usually rotten produce or horse feces, depending on what was within reach).

The most prominent feature on the tour is the luxurious garden of the Chateau Ramessy, home of the first governor of New France. It's in this building where Old Montreal's newest hauntings are said to take place. The haunting at the Chateau began in 1990, when it was under renovations. The furniture was moved in the eastern tower, and it seems that the spirit of the last living inhabitant (before the Chateau was bought by the government and turned into a museum), Mrs. O'Dowd, did not appreciate this. At first, the employees claimed to have heard noises – scratching, banging, human voices wailing – and later said they detected strange sulfurous smells coming from O'Dowd's former bedroom.

The guide finally returns the group to the Place d'Armes to conclude the tour with a talk about the ghost that allegedly roams the halls of the Place d'Armes Hotel & Suites – a young woman who supposedly threw herself out a window. Not much is known about the ghost, and the people working at the hotel's front desk will strongly deny her existence. Housekeepers, on the other hand, have a much looser tongue and might tell of a woman who occasionally appears in rooms, asking housekeeping staff to leave.

The Ghost Walk is an informative and spooky affair, but if you're looking for something a little more family-friendly, the tour company also offers a Ghost Hunt, which is led by a guide dressed as a mysterious monk, and features a variety of actors dressed as ghosts who appear during the tour to tell their haunted tales first-hand. Otherwise, the Ghost Walk is the best doorway to the grimmest stories from Old Montreal's long, haunted history.

The Ghost Walk on the east side is held on Saturdays and Wednesdays from July 4 to August 29, and on September 4, 12 and 26, as well as October 10 and 24, at 8:30 p.m. The ticket booth is in front of Notre-Dame Basilica, and it is recommended that guests show up fifteen minutes in advance to book the tour. The price is \$21.50 CAD for adults and \$12.50 CAD for children (twelve and under). For more information visit fandomontreal.com.



Phantoms Afloat: (Clockwise from top) the buildings of Bonsecours Market, where Mary Gallagher's tale was sealed; the neo-Gothic Notre-Dame Basilica in front of the Place d'Armes; the bas-relief of Saint Paul Christening an iniquous warrior; the supposedly supernatural Chateau Ramessy; (inset) a painting of coffin rider Simon McTavish; Ghost Walk patrons (top right) and a tour guide in the spirit of haunted Old Montreal

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THE GORE-MET

MENU

GORE-MET DISCOVERS A NEW MEANING FOR "DICKHEAD"



Trevi Clyde Tuckson (Elliot V. Kotek), fresh out of the joint after a stretch for auto theft, hitchhikes back to his rundown rural homestead so he can ask his gap-toothed, legless grandpap (Dick Mulaney) the one question that haunted his incarceration: "What's a header?"

Meanwhile, Stewart Cummings (Joke Suffman), a lightly-wound, recently transplanted big-city ATF agent forced to run drugs to pay mounting medical bills for his ailing girlfriend, has one question for his good ol' boy supervisor after the bodies of women with spilage-splattered brains start turning up under local highway underpasses: "What's a header?"

A header — as revealed in Archibald Flancranstin's *HEADER* — is a rather profane deed regarded by hillbillies as the ultimate act of vengeance you get on them's yer feuding with. It's based on a particularly nasty tale of the same name by notorious hardcore horror author Edward Lee (RMA'48).

"It was actually in the early '90s that my bent brain came up with the idea," says Lee. "I was trying to sell a collection of short stories but I wanted a brand-new hardcore novella to augment it. The concept was simply one of those things that occurred to me like a bolt of demented lightning one day. I still have to wonder about myself in this regard."

With a concept so, um, hard to swallow, surely filming a feature-length adaptation was a challenge for the filmmaker.

"I hate challenges," says Flancranstin. "I run away from them with a child-like grin stopped across my face. And stupid me came to realize that making a feature-length movie is the hardest thing anyone can attempt to do. Luckily, I picked a story I loved. *Header* is one of Lee's best. Behind the violence is a really intense [tale] of love, corruption, betrayal, family tradition, power tools. It's all in there. I really tried to focus on the characters and their stories."

Those characters perform some unusual acts that might be off-putting to the average actor. After all, skull-fucking onscreen — whether you're on the giving or receiving end — isn't exactly ideal resume material. Flancranstin admits casting the movie was a little tricky.



"Casting female header victims didn't pose any problems, but trying to convince Dick Mulaney to perform a header, that was... difficult," confesses Flancranstin. "Dick was 80 at the time, a father, a grandfather, a former professional piano player — a far cry from serial rapist! He read the script, called me up, and said he couldn't do it. I felt it was a sin just reading it. I pulled some crazy director voodoo on him until he believed he was actually doing God's work by performing headers."

The film has a regular routine of ocular trauma, cranial damage and splintery bullet hits that have something of a comic book feel to them, which neatly offsets the dark subject matter. However, Flancranstin says this wasn't deliberate.

"More like a happy accident," he explains. "I spoke to Tom Savini about doing the FX. He told me to check out his makeup school at the Douglas Education Center in PA. I wound up hiring four of its top students, specializing in one thing or another. Together, we came up with some neat-looking stuff. The header wounds were just amazing. The guys looked at pictures of murder victims and cadavers for authenticity."

Despite being made at a time when horror films were both popular and gratuitous, it's taken several years for the 2006 film to finally score a DVD release (out now from Synapse), due to the strong material that comprises the story. *HEADER* is a delightfully perverse black comedy made for those who get a kick out of *Bloodsucking Freaks* or *Street Trash*. It's wickedly smart and righteously offensive, particularly to women and anyone south of the Mason-Dixon Line, which makes it — to fog a cliché — an instant cult classic!

"It's even more over-the-top than I could ever imagine for a film version," says Lee. "When I first saw it on the big screen, I kept thinking: 'I can't believe they filmed that!' It's so faithful to my original story that I'm tickled pink, and the few changes the screenwriter made improved my story."

Notes Flancranstin: "All of the reviews we've had have been positive. Wargned individuals between the ages of seventeen and 35, ladies included, get a kick out of the flick. But normal people, like the ones who screened *HEADER* at the Rhode Island International Film Festival, didn't warm up to it as much. In fact, when the first header scene came on screen, seven people got up to leave. And for the second header scene, nine more people left. I learned a valuable lesson that day, my friends: normal people are losers."

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WORTH A TRY

REVIEWS BY KEITH CARMAN, PAUL CUSPUE, THOM DRAGEMIR,
 MARK R. HASAN, LAST CHANCE LANCE AND AARON VON UPTON



BOOGEYMAN

Joseph LoDuca

LA-LA LAND

It's a bit surprising to discover Joseph LoDuca's score for the rubbish film *Boogeyman* is actually a perfectly fine piece of work, albeit with some routine instrumental combinations. It helps that it's goosed with the sort of jarring little musical nuances one would expect from the composer of the *Evil Dead* films. Cuts include "Staples' Uncle Mike," which features an unconventional marriage of tumbling metallic sounds, screeching strings and a strangely elegant French horn, and "How Do You Sleep," which utilizes Indian percussion and a watery glass slide. A mesh-up of dissonance, sampled vocals and intrusive, surround sound weirdness dominates "Losing Loves/Read for the Man," into which LoDuca further integrates subtle Eastern European harmonies and a lovely sing-song theme in order to create little moments of eeriness and introspection. Alongside the exotic *Brotherhood of the Wolf*, *Boogeyman* is probably his best work, making this limited edition CD one definitely worth snapping up. **MRH 3.5/5**



THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT (2009)

John Murphy

LA-LA LAND

As his score for *28 Days Later* proved, John Murphy knows how

to nail the sound of isolation and emotional devastation. He does the same, with both class and gravitas, for the remake of *The Last House on the Left*. He's frightfully adept at writing sad little themes that can be spun into every kind of guise, whether it's the tender opening track, the devastating "After the Assault" or the mournful "Dead in the Water." Every cue has some connection to the main theme, and he never loses sight of the film's tragic characters, nor whatever conflicts are still at play. Even ethereal cuts such as "Candles" offer a fine combination of melancholy and eerie atmospherics, amply preparing the listener for the grimy electronics in the album's final act. Unquestionably, what Murphy delivers here is an impressionistic, gripping little gem. **MRH 3.5/5**



FREDRIK KLINGWALL

Works of Woe

LAST ENTERTAINMENT

Based on the poetry of Edgar Allan Poe (including the 1827 poem "Spirits of the Dead," about a graveyard conversation between the deceased and a living visitor), *Works of Woe* marks the conclusion of a trilogy of albums by Swedish composer Fredrik Klingwall — following up 2006's *The Resilience* (RM#87) and 2007's *Chronicles In Decay*. But while *The Resilience* boasted a lush soundtrack-like quality, *Works of Woe* is nine tracks of bare-bones piano, which ultimately comes off as cold, dark and just a little depressing. The vice here is minimalist but dramatic, conjuring images of the silent horror classics — perhaps *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. A fitting, if not completely entertaining, tribute to the master of mystery and the macabre. **AVL 3.5/5**



THE BRAINS

S/T

STOMP

Montreal psychobilly trio The Brains has outdone itself once again. While 2007's *Hell and Back* seemed like an unbeatable blast of upbeat shuffle, cryptic lyrics and hook-laden melodies, the undead mob has managed to craft even sweeter lines to float over their haunting riffs on this tertiary affair. From the raucous, speed-shifting opener "Thirty Days" through to "You're Dead" (featuring Sarah Sin from The Creepshow) to the moody "Little Angels," this eleven-track recording revels in subtle distortion, overt twang and vocalist Rene de la Muerte's velvety voice. Moreover, the album was recorded with just enough balance between live essence and studio polish to maintain the band's infectious excitement without sacrificing sound quality. Overall, it may be The Brains' poppest and least aggressive disc to

date, but it is by far their smoothest and most professional. **KC 3.5/5**



ROSEMARY'S BABIES

Talking To The Dead

GHOSTLY

Slogging their way out of the same New Jersey cesspool that gave birth to The Misfits, Rosemary's Babies were only together for three years when they broke up in 1983 — after drummer Ernie Von left to join Glenn Danzig's side-project Samhain. This collection of 25 tracks has been remastered from the original reel-to-reel tapes and is a brutal onslaught of break-neck guitar riffs, Gatling-gun drumming and mostly indecipherable lyrics reminiscent of The Exploited and (early) Black Flag. Songs such as "Alice in Murderland," "Blood Lust" and "Dead Zone" help listeners recall the band's sneeringly anti-establishment platform, though they tend to go astray with utterly offensive tracks

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Dick Jacobs & His Orchestra

MASTER CLASSICS

This classic album of monster movie themes celebrates its 50th anniversary with a digital MP3 rewrap. On this much-loved album (see RM#88), Jacobs' small but bombastic orchestra ably covers themes and incidental tracks from a handful of Universal's best-loved 1950s genre classics. Selection range from the measured drings of *The Mole People* to the more playful themes of *The Incredible Shrinking Man* and *The House of Frankenstein*; but perhaps the best tracks here are from *It Came From Outer Space* and Hammer's *The Horror of Dracula* (the sole non-Universal film included), where sinister brass stings nimbly atop rumbling percussion. These covers manage to capture a late-night TV movie vibe that the less memorable songs can't quite match. But what really makes the album worth hearing are the introductions by Bob McEldown, the voice-over artist later responsible for cereal pitchman Franken Berry. He begins each track with a warning about giant insects, vampires or aliens in a Karloffian wit. Jacobs' album is available at your favorite online music retailers, including iTunes and eMusic. **PG 3.5/5**



THE METEORS

Hell Train Roll'n'

People Like You

Unlike Forrest Gump's fabled box of "chaaaw-colates," you pretty much know what you're gonna get with The Meteors, textbook psychobilly ringing with buzzy guitar twang, sloppy bass and singer Paul French's over-imitated meat-grinder vocals. *Hell Train Roll'n'* continues this tried-and-true formula with the addition of a few bluesy, Southern rock turns (check out the ripping harmonica on "Devilbone Fugue"). The disc also includes a shady rendition of John Fogerty's "Old Man Down the Road" and a vigorous instrumental ("Surfin' Home on a Dead Girl") that you'll swear was a lost Ventures B-side from the '60s. The Meteors are consistently cool, perpetually punk, and with *Hell Train Roll'n'* they deliver another steaming hot slice of psycho. Here's hoping their train rolls on for many full moons to come. **TD 3.5/5**



like "Let's Molest." Still, with most songs averaging just over one minute, it's definitely worth a listen if you're up to taking an aural stroll through the piss-soaked alleys of horror punk at its rawest. **LCL 3.5/5**



THE RIGORMORTICIANS

Graveyardin' with Sexy Results

Independent

Aching to sound like Motörhead fused with the cavernous gang vocals of The Misfits, The Rigormorticians is yet another band seemingly content to phone it in musically, while believing the makeup and props of their live show will miraculously carry over to the album. It's clear from the opening title track that the Calgary quintet is relying on its sometimes humorous, hor-

ror-driven lyrical content to differentiate *Graveyardin'* with *Sexy Results* from a metric fuckload of other records. "1-2-3 CHUD" might elicit a giggle, and the wounded organ and distorted vocals of "Creature of the Night" briefly take things in a Tom Waits-ish direction, but the truest moment of the disc occurs on a live version of "Voodoo Vacation" when singer Mr. Mortician announces, "If we shit the bed on this, don't say I didn't warn ya." Hang on, guys, I think I have some clean linens out in the car. **TT 2.5**



UNDER A NIGHTMARE

Cemetery Gateway

Independent

It'd be easy to write off Pittsburgh's Under a Nightmare as a pack of

well-meaning skatepunks who have a love affair with Social Dis-tortion and The Misfits. But even though the vocals rarely diverge from a Mike Ness growl and the group's musical skills are a little rough around the edges—particularly the clumsy drumming, occasionally (and unintentionally) dissonant guitars and some wince-inducing off-key vocals—the sound moves beyond mere imitation as the album goes on. The character in the songwriting and the straightness of the lyrics exhibit a taste and sincerity that suggest Under a Nightmare is much more than a lark. Bleeding through the lack of well-practiced chops is a desire to be an authentic horror band, as can be evidenced on standout tracks "Trapped in this Skull," "Asylum Girl" and the anthemic death march of "Sunrise Has Gone." They're not there yet, but these ghouls show promise. **TT 3.5**



JUNGLE ROT

What Horrors Await

Napalm Records

It's been nearly fifteen years since their first record and nothing has changed in the Jungle Rot camp. Like each album before it, *What Horrors Await* is a slow, plodding, ultra-simplistic slab of old-school death metal dedicated to tales of horror and atrocity on the battlefield. No need to worry about politics or social commentary infiltrating their lyrics, Jungle Rot (the name is a reference to a particularly nasty skin lesion) are still all about violence for violence's sake. This is reflected in songs such as "Nerve Gas Catastrophe," "Exit Wounds" and the title track. Fans will be satiated with another dose of dumb-ass carnage, but the rest of you will likely be bored stiff. **AVL 3.5**

FUNERAL MIST

Maramatha

AUSA

Cult black metal project Funeral Mist's *Maramatha* (a New Testament reference with various interpretations) is nothing more than yet another satanic metal album, but at least it tries to make things more interesting with an eerie aesthetic to go along with the unrelenting blast-beat aggression. Opening with ones of "It's the plague!" and a series of monstrous bellows before the metal kicks in, the tone here is

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THE GIALLOS FLAME STOKES MUSICAL FIRES WITH THE *EURO SLASH* EP, THE PROG-ROCK TRIBUTE TO THE GOLDEN AGE OF ITALIAN SPLATTER SCORES.

Musica VIOLENTA

by AARON VON LUPTON

AS ANY DEVOTEE TO ITALIAN VIOLENT CINEMA KNOWS, it's not just the black-gloved slashing, zombie gut-slurping and wicked car chases that make movies such as *Tenebre*, *The Beyond* and *Live Like a Cop, Die Like a Man* so memorable. Just as important to the giallo, horror and *polizieschi* (Italian crime) classics are their expressive soundtracks, namely the far-out prog rock and analogue dread created by the likes of Goblin and Fabio Frizzi. UK-based The Giallos Flame has been paying tribute to this pulsating, keyboard-heavy vibe through two full-length albums, several seven-inch recordings and now an EP.

"I started The Giallos Flame in 2001 as a dedication and a way to carry on the sound of Italian horror, giallo and *polizieschi* soundtracks of the '70s," affirms Ron Graham, who is the band's sole member. "From the early to late '90s, I was actually a hip-hop producer, DJ and MC, doing sample-based music. I had never touched a live instrument in my life, but as hip-hop started losing its way in the late '90s I decided to try to make the music I used to sample, mainly funky soundtrack stuff."

After teaching himself to play a variety of instruments, Graham adopted the Giallos Flame moniker to release a seven-inch and self-titled full-length album in 2005 (RM450), followed by 2007's *Violent Professionals* and 2008's *House at the Edge of the Dark* before this year's *Euro Slash* EP. The eight-song (two of the tracks are an intro and outro) release includes "The Beyond," "The Ripper" and "Milano Violenta," which encapsulate the old-school spaghetti feel of the films they are named after.

"Frizzi's score for *The Beyond* is one of the best there is," says Graham. "I just wanted to try to create something with that epic feel, a lot of melotron on there, just like Fabio would use."

Other instruments used on *Euro Slash* include a Hammond organ, classic analogue synths (including the Sequential Prophet 5 and Juno 106), bass and guitar, creating sounds

that range from prog rock to rolling jazz and dirty funk. It all sounds so satisfyingly sleazy. So what's the secret?

"It's a mood that you've got to get in," explains Graham. "Dark minor chords, really funky drums and a nice menacing bass line with some crazy old analogue synth blasting over it. Goblin and Frizzi were masters of it."

As far as specific soundtracks that influenced The Giallos Flame, Graham says that there are too many to mention, but ranks Goblin's *Profondo Rosso*, *Contaminazione* and *Dawn of the Dead* near the top. Graham and his label 2600 Recordings are well aware that horror soundtrack fans often put a lot of effort and money into tracking down collectible vinyl releases, so they decided to reward them with *Euro Slash*. The CD includes a bonus seven-inch containing two of the songs from the disc: "The Ripper" and "Cool Running."

Graham explains that it's actually the CD that's the bonus: "The EP was done like that for value really, so you don't just get a seven-inch but a CD EP, as well. The songs for the seven-inch were chosen by the label and I agreed that they would be cool on a vinyl release. 'The Ripper' was always gonna be the one for the A-side, as it's a pretty sick track."

Given his penchant for '70s exploitation music, it's no surprise that Graham has scored some grindhouse-style projects. Most recently, The Giallos Flame contributed original music for the award-winning *Grindhouse* fake trailer *Hobo With a Shotgun* and indie exploitation film *Black Devil Doll* (credited as "Bamboo Gods" for contractual reasons). Early reviews of that film have made a point of praising *Black Devil Doll*'s score, something that brings Graham great satisfaction ("Especially when you have all those visual delights to distract you!" he exclaims of the movie's lurid imagery).

"I just really dig funky and dark soundtrack and library stuff, so that's where I'll stay," he says. "I think there's enough scope in that genre to do a lot of different styles and still keep it within the main title of 'soundtrack.'"

**I STARTED
THE
GIALLOS
FLAME
IN 2001 AS A
DEDICATION
AND A WAY TO
CARRY ON THE
SOUND OF
ITALIAN
HORROR
RON GRAHAM**

PLAY DEAD

GRAPHICS ▲

PLAYABILITY ▲

SHIVERS ▲

GAMES REVIEWED BY ANDREW LEE
BIGGEST BATING IS THREE



SPIRIT SLAYERS/ NIGHT STALKERS

RPG Sourcebook
White Wolf Publishing

▲▲
▲▲
▲▲

For nearly two decades, White Wolf's consistently polished and always intriguing *World of Darkness* series has been the main reason why supernatural-themed RPGs continue to thrive—even in a day and age where most gamers are content to sit in their basements and blast video game zombies.

Unlike most of White Wolf's titles, where players take on the roles of vampires or werewolves, these two new sourcebooks are meant to be incorporated with their *Hunter: The Vigil* gaming line, in which players belong to one of many different human factions that are trying to keep us all safe from the forces of evil.

White Night Stalkers is an exhaustive look at the world of vampires—their history, organizations, strengths and weaknesses—*Spirit Slayers* deals with the world of shape-shifters, placing great emphasis on the different types of werewolves, skinchangers and spirits that lurk in the dark waiting to prey on the unsuspecting.

Each book is over 200 pages long and crammed full of info dealing with new weapons, tactics, etc. for storytellers and players, all while providing an entirely new hunting ground for your nocturnal adventures: Philadelphia, The City of Brotherly Love.

One of the strengths of the *World of Darkness* series has always been its fabulous artwork, and these books are no exception. Be sure to ogle the creepy cover art, which looks as though it may take a bite out of you. It was crafted by none other than *Rue Morgue*'s very own Justin Erickson. 'Nuff said!



THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

PC, PS3, Xbox 360
Atari

▲▲
▲▲
▲▲

It's nearly a decade after Vin Diesel's sinister performance as ruthless criminal Richard B. Riddick in the sci-fi thriller *Pitch Black*, and the franchise now spans two sequels, a line of action figures and two video games.

Assault on Dark Athena is the follow-up to 2004's *Escape From Butcher's Bay*, which had gamers trying to flee one of the most notorious slammers in the universe. This time around you're trapped on a spaceship filled with low-life mercenaries and hordes of scary, Borg-like drones that you'll have to sneak past in the shadows or slice and dice into tiny pieces with one of the many different melee weapons available in your arsenal.

Raspy voice-acting by Diesel himself and cool cameos by Ron Perlman (*Hellboy*) and Lance Henriksen (*Alien3*), plus amazing graphics, online multiplayer capability and a revamped version of *Butcher's Bay* (also included) make this the kind of game worth going into solitary for.



THE PENUMBRA COLLECTION

PC
Pentaware Interactive

▲▲
▲▲
▲▲

Since 2007, those who have ventured into the dark realm of episodic survival horror game *Penumbra* have understood the meaning of fear: Previous installments *Overture* (RMA69) and *Black Plague* (RMA77) are now joined by new title *Requiem* in a collection that features all three games on one disc.

Requiem is set deep beneath the icy wastes of Greenland in a vast, mysterious research facility inhabited by giant worms, attack dogs, spiders and zombies. Here, you probe the darkness via a point-and-click interface with real-world dynamics, trying to solve the mystery behind your father's death. As you progress through the titles, game play moves seamlessly from combat to puzzle-solving skills (e.g. avoid a deadly electrical beam, repair a dangerous steam pipe). The walls of monsters and the infected that emanate from myriad darkened corners create an atmosphere of panic and claustrophobia. It's a terrifying place to get lost, so stock up on adult diapers—and I don't mean for your character!

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CLASSIC CUT

"REQUIEM"

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART AUSTRIA - 1791



There is a famous scene in the movie *Amadeus*: a quiet, gloomy winter night suddenly interrupted by a thundering knock at the door. Wolfgang Mozart, only 35 years of age but already fragile with sickness, opens the door to a stranger dressed entirely in black. He has come to commission a death mass — a requiem — from the celebrated but destitute composer. He cautions him to tell no one and to work in secret, then hands him a bag of money before vanishing into the night.

Considering the kind of liberties that Hollywood traditionally takes with history, that particular scene seems more like the stuff of legend than fact. But actually, the story behind Mozart's last written work — a mass for the dead — is just as strange and mysterious.

The year was 1791 and Mozart had already gained recognition in Vienna, then a pinnacle of European music and culture. There, through a frantic schedule of composition and tutoring, Mozart made an adequate if meagre living for his wife Constanze and their two children.

Yet his music was widely heard and Mozart was a celebrity, so it was not entirely unusual when he was approached by a mysterious messenger who presented him with an unsigned letter inquiring whether he would be willing to write a requiem mass. After settling on a fee, Mozart was warned not to attempt to find out who had given the order, a stipulation that began to grow and eventually torment him as he worked to complete it.

Struggling with an illness he had contracted while on a visit to Prague, he laboured through the days and into the nights, channeling all of his energy into the piece, but the work had begun to take its toll on him. Mozart became morose, fell into a depression and eventually confided in Constanze his growing fear that someone was trying to murder him, and that he was writing the requiem for his own impending funeral.

In fact, Mozart was dying. By November 20 he was bedridden, seized by bouts of vomiting, his hands and feet swollen. But he remained conscious and continued working intermittently on "Requiem," though eventually the swelling made it impossible for him to write. Until his final day,

Mozart was consumed by completing the death mass, which for years led to the fantastic, if not entirely inaccurate, idea that, in the end, it was the requiem that killed him.

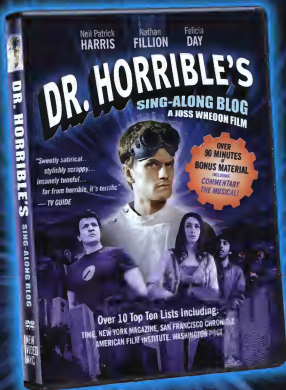
On the morning of December 5 Mozart died and was buried in an unmarked grave, his last great work uncompleted. Faced with financial ruin, Constanze commissioned a slew of fellow composers, chiefly Franz Xaver Süssmayr, to finish it. Finally the work was delivered in 1792. Mozart's "Requiem" was heard for the first time in its entirety on January 2, 1793 when it was performed for his widow.

A grand showcase of Mozart's musical genius, the Requiem is a fourteen movement mass for the dead, beginning with a short introitus that bursts into bombast before settling into gentle interweaving string lines and an ethereal, angelic choir. At its heart is the Sequenz which strikes tension between the booming, triumphant chorus of Dies Irae, the staccato frenzy of Confutatis and the melancholy Lacrimosa, with its haunting sense of dread and fragmented vocal lines. Clocking in at less than an hour, "Requiem" is a musical funeral that takes the listener through physical death, the anguish for the loss of life and the triumph of the spirit beyond mortality.

It is no surprise that the "Requiem" has become an anthem for death and dying and has, over the years, provided the soundtrack to films as diverse as Stanley Kubrick's sinister *Eyes Wide Shut*, George A. Romero's zombie apocalypse *Land of the Dead* and Nacho Cerdá's grim meditation on death *Aftermath*, among many others.

In the end, history was able to solve the mystery behind Mozart's "Requiem." It has since been discovered that the mysterious messenger who appeared like a ghost and terrified the composer was actually the steward of one Franz von Walsegg, a wealthy count who commissioned the "Requiem" in hopes of passing it off as his own, intending to belatedly honour his deceased wife. The count had no idea that his pathetic plan would not only produce the world's greatest funeral music, but would also lead to the dramatic death of one of the world's greatest musical minds.

ROBERTO MARTIN



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